IO4 Toolkit for managers

Circle of Influence

1. Why this tool?

As a manager or team leader you face new challenges every day: a changing job market, the expansion of your product and/or service supply, customers that are getting more demanding… and then there's your team.

Diversity in a group of people causes challenges in terms of cooperation and communication, and all changes have consequences for the daily workload. This can have a positive or negative impact on people's stress level and on the perception of one's workload.

When you are dealing with long-term stress, it is important to look at which stress factors you can rule out to reduce tension. Energy guzzlers or things that you are constantly worried about can really control your (working) life. Here, proactivity is key. You can only change from within or as a team if you take responsibility and if you decide that you can and will do something about it. If you keep overthinking and denying that you can do something about it, you will not be able to act. Being and thinking more proactively will raise resilience whereas focusing on things you can't influence and acting reactively will reduce resilience by an increase in your stress levels.

Imagine the following scenario: *after a long period of stress, you and your team decide to organise a team day to relax, recuperate and – let's be honest – to simply enjoy a well-deserved reward. You choose a nice outdoor activity; the staff and yourself set up for a picnic in the park and a long walk afterwards. Unfortunately, the weather is very poor on the day of the team activity… what to do now?*

There are 2 possible reactions to the situation:

From reactive to proactive (www.desteven.nl)

Reactive	Proactive
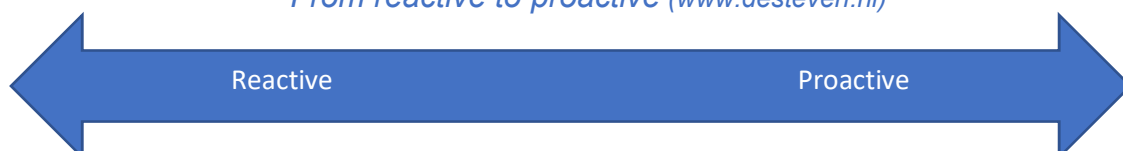
Be led by circumstances	*Take control and prioritise*
'This always happens to me'	*Make choices*
'That's the way it is'	*'I am going to do something about it'*
'I don't have a choice: I need to!'	*'I have options!'*
Letting things be	*'I go for it and bring issues out into the open'*
'I will let someone else decide'	*'I know what I want and will ask other people's opinion'*

On the one hand you have responses such as: *'It could have been so nice', 'Why does this always happen to us?', 'We have worked so hard', 'Don't we deserve it?',*... Stephen Covey calls these a source of **reactive attention**. When we think and act reactively, we focus on matters that concern you and that you cannot change. All this is situated in the 'circle of concern'.

Reactive people focus on and put their energy into things that are not under their control and influence. People who choose this focus primarily pay attention to others' weaknesses, problems in their environment and circumstances they can do little or nothing about. They sometimes blame others and feel more and more like a victim. This makes them neglect or overlook those issues that are under their control and influence. Their focus is elsewhere and their 'Circle of Influence' shrinks. Reactive people are led by circumstances, rarely or never have any time ('I didn't have time for …' or 'I did not manage to …'), struggle to see the whole picture and, above all, little rest.
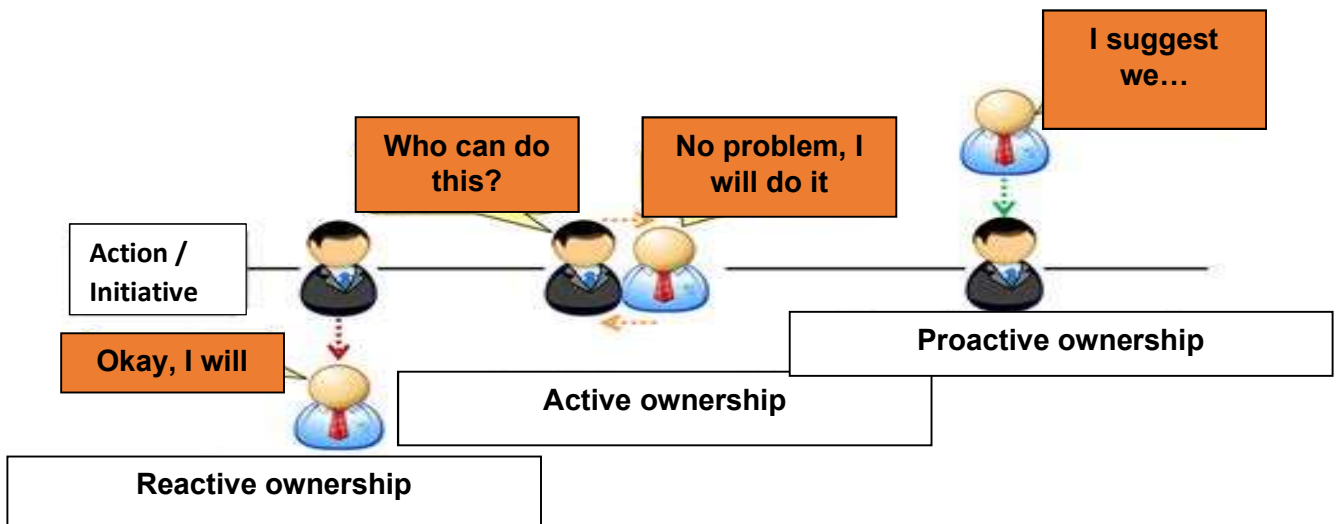
Their stress level rises and resilience falls.

On the other hand, there may be responses such as: *"Guys, we can still have a picnic! Let's make it very cosy inside and have it here', 'We do another activity first?',…* Stephen Covey calls these responses **a source of proactive attention**. All this is situated in the 'circle of influence'.

When we think and act proactively, we focus on matters that have a direct influence and control over you. We focus our attention and put energy into what we can influence, so on a circle of influence.

Proactive people, on the other hand, focus on and put their energy into things that are within their control and influence. They choose to focus on issues that they can do something about and take action, initiative and responsibility for all matters they feel are within their control and influence. They limit involvement in issues they cannot influence and let them go. This makes it possible to take concrete action and spreads positivity. Proactive people make CHOICES based on (important) needs. They rest enough, maintain a broad overview of the several elements that make up each situation and combine the two: they take the time to see the bigger picture.

Stimulating a proactive quality in your employees is crucial if you wish to deal with stress and changes effectively. Let's face it, don't we all want to be more proactive and less reactive?

Action / Initiative

Who can do this?

No problem, I will do it

I suggest we…

Okay, I will

Proactive ownership

Active ownership

Reactive ownership

2. Video/webinar

Video 1: Circle of Influence. This video explains what it is and what you should know about it, and gives some concrete examples and tips

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1wptGvREOj8

Video 2: Stephen Covey shares an experience where one proactive employee increases his effectiveness by focusing on his inner Circle of Influence

http://www.franklincovey.nl/circle-of-influence/#

Video 3: How to Not Get Overwhelmed by the World - 7 Habits of Highly Effective People by Stephen Covey

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qzeQtM7OIik&feature=youtu.be

3. Tips & tricks (checklists)

Tips on how to stimulate a proactive focus in others

1. **Divide the elephant into pieces**

For employees, big and demanding tasks often seem like hurdles they can't take; 'elephant tasks'. The metaphor of a huge and powerful elephant is used to demonstrate how to turn overwhelming activities into more bite-size pieces.
An elephant has a trunk, 4 legs, a tail, 2 large ears, a back, … When you divide the elephant into 'bite-size' pieces (e.g. 'I will focus on X today, then move onto Y tomorrow, etc.'), you realise that the whole is something else than the sum of its parts. Something that seems impossible at first can suddenly become doable. Teach your employees to schedule regular 'bites' of the elephant tasks and concentrate on 1 task at a time. It will boost their energy and self-belief.

2. Create goals

Proactivity focuses on the future, and therefore on goals. People tend to adopt a reactive attitude when they don't have a clear goal to reach. But effective people, who know their goals, can see their daily actions in the broader context. This bigger picture makes them focused and motivated. As a result, they will be more effective and always have a purpose. Covey uses an excellent analogy: 'If the ladder is not leaning against the right wall, every step we take just gets us to the wrong place faster.' You need to start by choosing the right building / by setting your goals. It only makes sense to climb the ladder when you've

set your goals.

When setting goals, you can use the following checklist:

A SMART-goal allows you to work inside your circle of control.

For example: one employee has a branding responsibility to make sure that the company website and social media attracts as many visitors as possible. If the goal is defined as just that – 'as many as possible' – the employee will not know what is expected of him/her and when the goal has been reached. This will likely lead to 'reactive' behaviour. However, if this employee, or you as a manager, defines the goal according to 'SMART', it will lead to more 'proactive' actions (e.g. our website should attract 500 visitors a day at the end of this year compared the current number of 200).

3. Stimulate employees to take action within the company

Participation is another condition for a proactive focus. An active employee engages in conversations, detects threats, investigates opportunities and puts forward solutions. By taking part in the process, one becomes part of the solution. As an exercise, you can let employees come up with improvements, activities, products and/or services that can add value to the company, the employees or yourself. They can, for example, detect a need for a nice room to organise brainstorming sessions, a more pleasant place to work, ... These ideas should be developed. Agree on who does what. Give everyone enough elbow room but be clear about deadlines, budget, … The outcome will amaze you.

4. Clarify

Let employees know what you expect proactivity will bring about. Point out the benefits of a proactive focus for yourself, the team, the organisation and, more importantly, for the employee. There are many ways to recognise proactive behaviour (in yourself and in others):

- Acting according to own principles;
- Suggesting ideas to respond to changes, opportunities and threats;
- Doing everything he/she can to achieve what he/she finds important;
- Daring to ask questions to come to new insights;
- Self-reflecting to gain more self-knowledge;
- Offering solutions;
- Seeking challenges and surrounding yourself with people who bring out the best in you;
- Not sitting back when there are problems;
- Taking the lead.

5. Positive focus

When you notice that employees are stuck in worries/problems/issues that are not within their control, in other words, when they are stuck in their Circle of Concern, try asking them questions that focus on the positive.
For example:
a. What *can* you change about this situation?
b. When *do* you have fun?
c. What *can* you do in this situation?
d. What *can* you influence?
e. What *do* you want to focus on?

6. Don't compare people to others and reveal each person's strengths

Some people tend to think they are better or worse than their colleagues at certain things. Of course, each person has his/her strengths and areas of

improvement, but that doesn't mean they are better or worse than others.

Instead, these people should focus on the importance of complementarity. As an employer, you can help them do this by e.g.:

- organising team meetings with a moment for compliments;
- asking colleagues to write on a post-it note what they appreciate about each other and stick the notes onto a wall
- ... Can you think of something else?

7. Schedule regular meetings with your employees to monitor their work's progress

These meetings are a good opportunity to discuss clients, projects and tasks. Make sure to follow these steps:

a. Compliment the employee about the tasks that were done proactively. In other words, reinforce proactivity.
b. Always ask which tasks lie ahead and how to anticipate them. This keeps the focus on the Circle of Influence.
c. End the meeting by asking if there is anything you can do to help/support (don't do every task, the employee remains responsible).

8. Make proactivity visible and recognisable

- Question 1: Why do you work here?

  Ask your employees why they work for your company and what they would like to contribute to it? People become more proactive when they are aware of the reason they work for the company and of the value they can add.

  Pay attention: some employees will answer "I don't know, I really need the money." Not all employees are immediately open to more proactive thinking and acting. If that is the case, try the following steps:

  o Reassure the employee that it is okay. Show understanding. Say, for example, "That's okay, it does not seem like an easy situation for you."

  o Indicate that you want to do something with this, for the employee himself as well as for you and the company. For example: "Together, I would like to investigate how we can add other motivations than money. That can also give you a better feeling when you come to work."

  o Ask questions to investigate what can be done differently

    ▪ Suppose you had enough money and still worked here: what does attract you in this company?

    ▪ What do you like about the activities of our company?

- What ideas do you have to motivate others, for example other colleagues who also just work here because they need the money?
- What could we add to the company to increase your happiness at work?

- Question 2: Envisioning - Creating a vision of the future
  Why is it important that your employees become more proactive? What's in it for them?
- Question 3: Give concrete examples
  In what kind of situations are people not proactive but reactive? How does that happen? And can you find a way to change this behaviour together?

9. Use proactive language in your conversation, team meetings…

Reactive language	Proactive language
- There is nothing I can do about it - This is just how I am - He makes me so angry - They will never allow that - I have to do that - I can't do that - I have to - If only I had X or Y (e.g. a good boss, a nice partner, more money, a beautiful house, no worries, a good education, children that listen well, more time for myself)	- Let's look at our alternatives - I can choose another approach - I have control over my own feelings - I can make an effective presentation - I will give an appropriate response - I choose, I want - I prefer - I can be, I am - I can be more X or Y (e.g. patient, sensible, loving, attentive)

Source: Covey, p. 78

10. Lead by example

A proactive attitude is a must for managers and executives. In fact, leadership (a managerial position) starts with *personal* leadership. And proactivity is an important part of that. So, your behaviour also contributes to the culture in your company. Would you like to promote proactivity in the company culture? Lead by example!

• When you are never on top of things, you can be sure that your team or organisation will copy that kind of behaviour.

• When you make up excuses like 'That's just me', don't expect your team members to take responsibility.

• When you self-victimise ('This always happens to me'), your employees won't take control either.

• When you set priorities, this behaviour will be copied in your organisation. When you take the lead, people will follow (they will feel inspired to be pro-active in the same way as you are).

• When you take responsibility for your own actions, so will your employees.

Tips on how to stimulate a proactive focus in yourself and to let things go

1.   Keep a broad overview

Decide which tasks you want to be done more proactively and how you will implement/introduce this. Write it down and inform employees.

*being proactive rather than reactive means to control a situation rather than letting it control you.*

2.   Be vulnerable

Even you, the manager, won't always adopt a proactive attitude. Ask your employees for feedback: in which areas can you act more proactively, according to them? Let them give you tips. Thank them for the suggestions and take action.

YOU FEEL VULNERABLE WHEN YOU HEAR THINGS THAT ARE NOT BEING SAID

3.   Focus on WHAT instead of HOW

When you explain tasks to your team, you can act in a helping or hindering way. 'Hindering' means that you don't only tell them WHAT needs to be done, but also HOW it should be done. You, furthermore, constantly adjust the execution. This often causes frustration among employees who like to work more freely and therefore want to act proactively. Delete the HOW from your story. Give them back their responsibility and they will regain their professional autonomy.
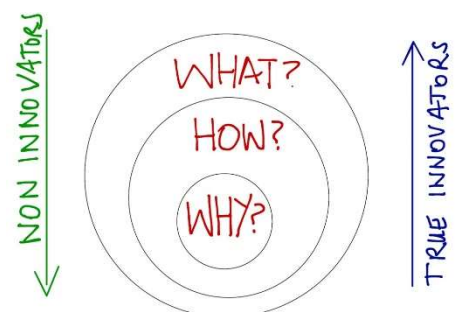
This way they will be more focused on the Circle of Influence and, at the same time, you will be able to let things go a bit more and focus on what you want and need to control. Stay in charge of the end result and give the employees feedback on this result.

4. Exercises

Exercise: train your proactivity and the proactivity of others.

Your own proactivity

1) As a manager, look at your function (tasks & responsibilities) critically.
2) Write down your most important tasks and what they entail. Then evaluate whether you carry out these tasks reactively – actively – proactively. Tick the box with an (X)
3) If you have indicated that you are working in a reactive or active way, write down 1 tip/action that might help you become more proactive.

Below you can see an example already filled in. It's up to you to continue.

Tasks	Reactive	Active	Proactive
Managing teams: Hold conversations with employees	X (I will do this only when an employee asks for a conversation)		

What I can do to act more proactively is

………………………………………………………….

This gives me the following advantage

………………………………………………………………………

The proactivity of others

1) Sit together with your team (e.g. during a meeting) or do this exercise individually with your employees. Let them do the same, based on their job description and main activities. Ask them to look at their own function (tasks & responsibilities) with a critical eye. Let them write down the most important tasks and what they entail.
2) Explain what the terms 'reactive actions', 'active actions' and 'proactive actions' mean.

3) Ask your employees to assess the implementation of their most important tasks and activities and to tick the relevant box (X): reactive – active – proactive.

4) <u>At team level</u> you can put the employees together in groups of 2 or 3 (regardless of whether they have the same functions or not). Firstly, let the groups brainstorm actions that might help them become more proactive. Secondly, employees present the results of their brainstorm to the entire group; sharing something with each other ensures that one can address each other' responsibility and increases accountability.

<u>On an individual level</u> you can take a step forward together with your employee. Write down an action / actions that might help them become more proactive. You can complement this by setting an action for yourself, if the employee has indicated that you are working in a reactive or active way.

Tasks	Reactive	Active	Proactive

What I can do to act more proactively is

………………………………………………………….

This gives me the following advantage

………………………………………………………………

Exercise: you as a future coach – defining people's zones of influence

In order to increase employees' proactivity and at the same time increase their circle of influence, it is important that you first recognise what someone is putting into their circle of concern and what might / could be in their circle of influence.
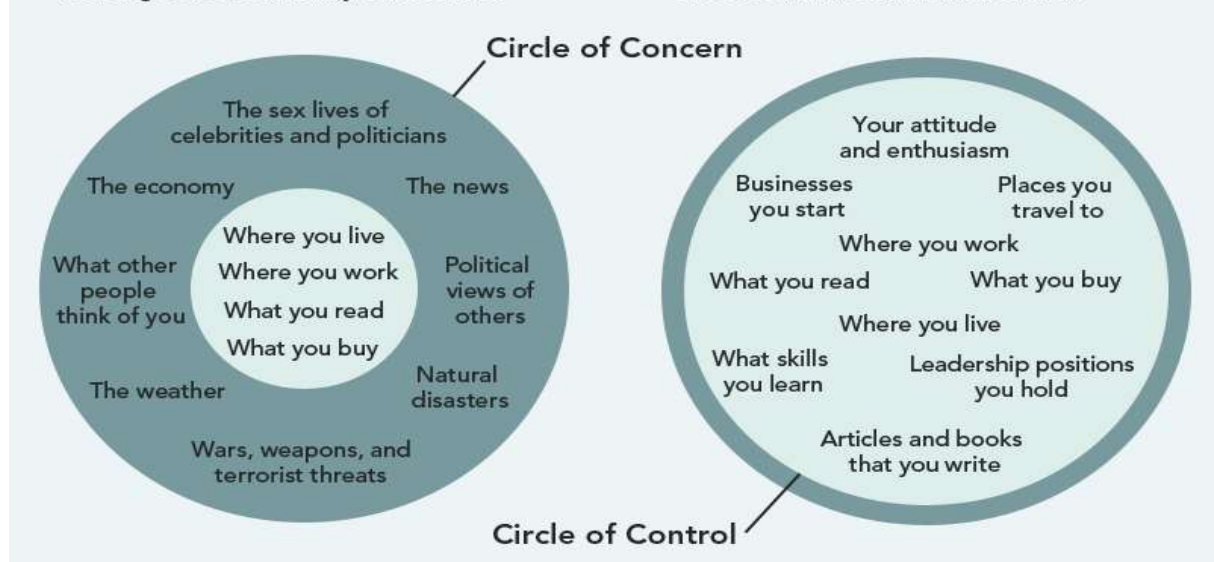
Circle of Concern vs. Circle of Control

How Reactive People Act
Large Circle of Concern and a small Circle of Control. A lot of time and energy is wasted reacting to issues that they can't control.

How Proactive People Act
Small Circle of Concern and a large Circle of Control. A lot of time and energy is focused on issues that are within their control.

Circle of Concern

The sex lives of celebrities and politicians
The economy
The news
Where you live
Where you work
What you read
What you buy
What other people think of you
Political views of others
The weather
Natural disasters
Wars, weapons, and terrorist threats

Your attitude and enthusiasm
Businesses you start
Places you travel to
Where you work
What you read
What you buy
Where you live
What skills you learn
Leadership positions you hold
Articles and books that you write

Circle of Control

Below you will find 2 cases. It's up to you to decide what lies within the speaker's circle of influence (= where his/her focus should be) and what is outside his/her control (and therefore better let go). Also try to describe how he/she could do that. The more concrete, the easier in practice.

Case study 1. A colleague of yours has been having a hard time for a while now. She is concerned every day about the coming changes that will take place. She thinks it will ruin the office atmosphere, that people are going to have to work overtime to get everything done and that customers will feel the impact because the quality of services offered will lower considerably.

Outside of control: what is she unable to influence?	
Inside of control: what can she influence?	

Solution:

Outside of control: what is she unable to influence?	• The upcoming changes and the effect this will have on her and her colleagues.

Inside of control: what can she influence?	• How she reacts to the changes, e.g. in a positive way, in a rebellious way, etc.
	• What and how she communicates about this towards other colleagues and team managers.
	• Work overtime: she can set limits and indicate what does and does not work for her.
	• Stay positive with regard to the change: spot the advantages and communicate these to others.
	• Ask for help and offer support to each other to maintain a positive atmosphere.
	• Check what clients expect to get from the organisation's services.
	• Quality: double check the changes that are made in tasks to keep insuring quality towards customers.

Case 2: A colleague of yours has been having a hard time for a while now. He says to you that he doesn't feel happy at his job. He repeatedly mentions that the wage is too low for what he has to do, that he doesn't get enough appreciation, but that he doesn't know what to do otherwise. He feels stuck.

Outside of control: what is he unable to influence?	
Inside of control: What can he influence?	

Solution:

Outside of control: what is she unable to influence?	• The conditions of his job.
Inside of control: what can he influence?	• Wage bargaining.

	- Search for a new job with conditions that he finds important. - Get help: follow career guidance as an intermediate step. - Specify which tasks he could leave out so that the wage is proportionate to what he does. - Vision on the job: help him define the way he looks at his job and the weight he gives to it as a whole, and to certain elements in particular. Having a more specified vision can help grow his Circle of Influence. - Goal setting: what does he want to achieve with this job? Why is he doing this job? - Asking for more explicit feedback instead of waiting until someone compliments him. - List the aspects that he likes and doesn't like to do, communicate these to your manager and try to find a mutually acceptable solution.

Exercise: coaching the Circle of Influence

If you better recognise what is within the 2 circles, you can get started to coach someone. This exercise focuses on the latter. We will give you some questions that can help you better engage employees in the conversation, and advice you to follow the next steps:

1) Your employee writes down a specific aspect of the job that causes stress and that he/she wants to tackle more effectively. Ask your employee to draw 2 circles and to write the answers to the following questions within these circles, dividing them between the Circle of Influence and Circle of Concern.

Questions you can ask the employee to fill in the Circle of Influence:

- What aspects of this stress/pressure are you already influencing?
- What have you done in similar situations in the past?
- Which strategies that seem to work, do other people employ to deal with these stresses?

- Is there anything else you could do yourself?

Questions you can ask the employee to fill in the Circle of Concern:
- Which aspects that you can't influence do you worry about?
- Each time you write something in the outer circle (the Circle of Concern), ask yourself whether you have any influence on it (however small) and what that influence may be.

2) Learning journal: drawing up a personal development plan

Finally, set up a concrete action plan with your employee. Now that you know what is in the two circles, you can also start looking at how you can actually convert this (growing the circle of influence, and shrinking the circle of concern).

With regard to my influence zone in this situation, I'll DO the following 3 things:

a)

b)

c)

→ What support do you need to realise this?

→ What does this support entail?

→ How will you ask for it?

→ What support can I (the employer) offer you?

Exercise: influencing all aspects of the job

Both employees and fellow managers can tell you that they have trouble with the IT systems that make their work more difficult, that they receive insufficient training to increase their expertise or that communication is difficult. In this case, alarm bells should go off; these are signs that they focus on their circle of concern and therefore respond more reactively. In this exercise we would like to help you bring the thinking and acting of employees or colleagues in the direction of pro activity.

First, we like to sketch a case and explain in this way the steps you can follow to increase proactivity in different areas of work. Secondly, we ask you to solve a case by yourself using the same technique. Finally, you can use this in your own practice.

Imagine the following situation: you have a sales employee who makes little progress in a project for which he is responsible. He has a hard time making decisions and with every one of them he comes to you asking what he should do. He overthinks all disadvantages and keeps postponing. You also often hear him sigh and say "I really do not know what to decide, the market is so unstable now that every choice can go wrong again, I cannot change that anyway". Today you would like to have a conversation with him to increase his proactivity.

A. First, you need to determine the core theme that you see in his behaviour and hear in his statements. In this example you see that it is about **'making good choices'**. This will be the theme of your conversation. You can open the conversation as follows:

"I've noticed that you've been having a hard time making choices and are coming to my desk regularly to ask for my opinion. Today I would like to see how I can support you in making these decisions yourself. I will do this on the basis of this scheme (see above) which we will try to fill in together."

B. In order to stimulate the employee, you can use 2 questions to shift focus to the circle of influence and convert it into concrete actions. The 2 questions start with:
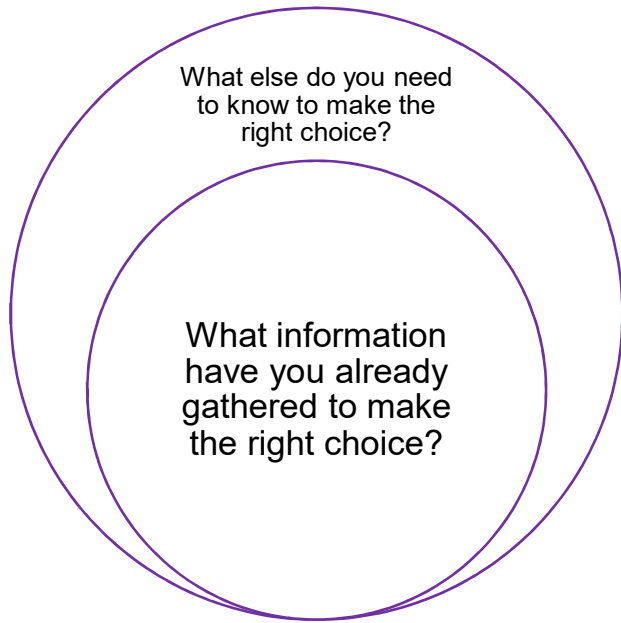
- What / which wants / should you ...
- What already / which already ...

The questions are completed by adding the topic you want to address. The formulation is always positive (what you can add, what already exists, etc.). For example:

➔ **What should** you add to increase your knowledge?
➔ **Which** knowledge do you **already** have?
➔ **What** does **already** work?
➔ **Which** subjects would you **want** to learn about?

Below, we give you a visual representation that you can also use in conversations with your employees. You start with the inner circle and in a second phase you move to the outer circle. The questions about good choices are as follows:

THEME: Right choices

What else do you need to know to make the right choice?

What information have you already gathered to make the right choice?

I would like to know how other colleagues are addressing it and I might need more time for a thorough market analysis...

I know that it is important to make a list of advantages and disadvantages

C. Finally, you ask the employee HOW he will put this into action, when he will do this and how he is going to brief you. Don't forget to ask what support you can offer and clearly state that you will follow the process. If the conversation gets stuck, you can name what you believe is already going well and offer suggestions. It is important to leave the final decision to the employee, especially when he is the one to learn how to make good choices.

Now it's up to you ... read the following case and follow the same steps:

- Determine the theme
- Formulate the 2 questions
- Describe how you would introduce the conversation.

Case study: Tomorrow you have a meeting with the manager of team X. During the past few weeks you have noticed that he is conducting interventions at random to ensure that the team makes more profit. You think he's losing himself in the process and that he does not know what the right approach is now as he's focusing on the lack of profit the numbers are showing. In conversations you can also hear him say "my team is really not motivated. I give them different options to increase profit and yet it always fails. How is that possible?"
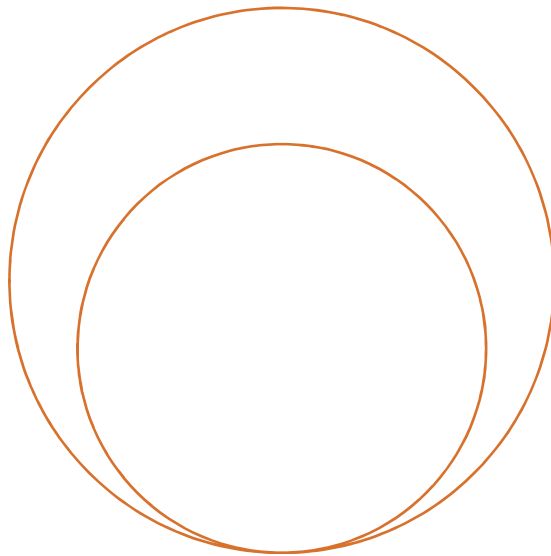
Solution:

Theme: effective approach

Questions:

- What information have you already collected about what has worked and how did you tackle that?
- What information do you still need in order to know what really works?

Exercise: put employees into a proactive mode

Awareness, action and reflection are the three key elements of becoming more proactive. The following exercise is all about practising those elements.

- Step 1: Think of a specific situation in which you didn't achieve/aren't achieving the results you set out to attain.
- Step 2: How did you react/are you reacting to this situation now? Is it effective? (awareness)
- Step 3: Is there a better way to react next time? (awareness)
- Step 4: Try out your intended behaviour next time (action)
- Step 5: What is the result of your new behaviour? What did and what didn't work out? (reflection)

Not satisfied with the result? Repeat step 3 to 5 until you are.

Exercise: train your own proactivity and that of others

Train your own proactivity

1) Analyse your managerial function (job responsibilities) critically. Make a list of the most important tasks below and write down what they entail.

2) Evaluate whether you carry out these tasks reactively - actively – proactively: tick the box.

3) If you've indicated that you work in a reactive or active way, write down what might be the first step/action towards proactivity.

Below, you can see an example. Now it's up to you.

Tasks	Reactive	Active	Proactive
Managing team: Have conversations with employees	X I only organise meetings/ conversations with my employees when they indicate they need it		

I can do the following to act more proactively……………………………………………………….
My benefits will be: ………………………………………………………………………………..

Train the proactivity of others

1) Do the same exercise as a team (e.g. during a team meeting) or individually with your employees. Have them analyse their own function (job responsibilities) with a critical eye. Ask them to write down what the most important tasks are and what they entail.

2) Explain the difference between reactive, active and proactive actions.

3) Let them evaluate whether they carry out their tasks reactively – actively – proactively: tick the box.

    When you work as a team, you can divide the team into groups of 2 to 3 people (regardless of their position) and let them, together or alone, come up with one step/action towards proactivity for each group member. The employees will present the results of this brainstorm to the entire team. Sharing something in group creates a common sense of responsibility, in turn increasing proactivity amongst your team members.

    When you do the exercise one-on-one, you can take a step forward together with your employee. If he or she indicated that they work in a reactive or active way, write down what might be the first step/action towards proactivity.

Tasks	Reactive	Active	Proactive

I can do the following to act more proactively………………………………………………….

My benefits will be: ………………………………………………………………………..

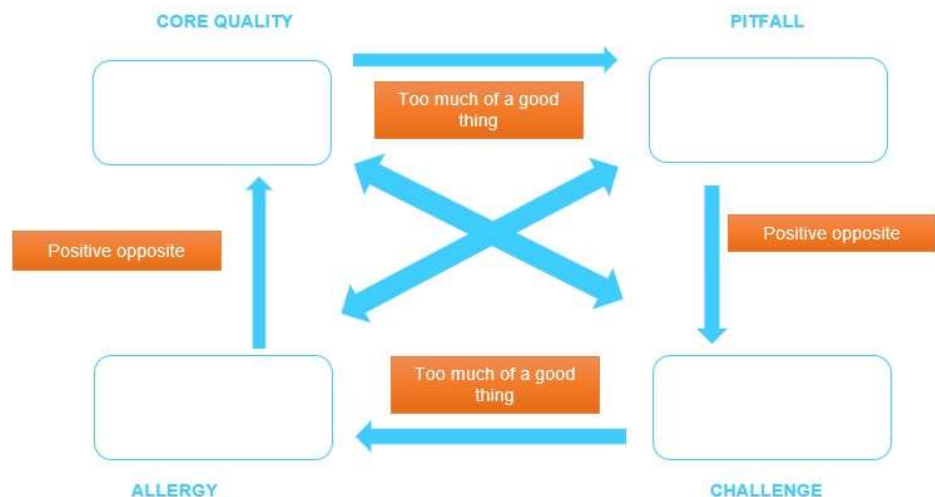# Ofman's Core quadrants

1. Selected tool and why this tool?

Each individual in a team has a set of qualities. If you can express and use these qualities in your job and/or your daily life, chances are that you feel good about yourself and what you are doing. You will therefore feel more resilient. When you cannot express these qualities or are using them in a negative way, it may have a downwards effect on yourself and others. Stress, frustration and even conflict will occur on a more regular basis. It is therefore extremely important as a manager to help employees identify and clarify their strengths and weaknesses. Only then you will discover the exact challenges that keep them from becoming more resilient in the workplace.

To put this into practice, we will present you with 'The Core Quadrants' of Danial Ofman, a commonly used, clear and accessible method that will help you to analyse conflicts and to promote cooperation. In this quadrant we see 4 elements: your core quality, pitfall, challenge and allergy.

What are core qualities?

Core qualities are, according to the author Daniel Ofman the specific strengths that characterise someone. Something you are really good at, or for which you are often praised by others. They make you the person you are today. You look at these qualities as being so obvious, that you give them little attention or thought. You believe that anyone can do it. They colour the way

you look at things, how you behave, how you interact with others and what bothers you about their behaviour. Core qualities are also the positive points/characteristics that another person will use to describe you if he is requested to do so. Sometimes your core qualities are so evident to who you are as a person and how you act in life that you do not understand that others are not like you or do not behave in the same way. For example, if you were born as a very decisive person then you will behave that way, without any extra effort or energy, but that does not mean everyone else will do the same.

Qualities can turn into pitfalls

When the limit has been exceeded Daniel Ofman speaks of a pitfall in which the quality has a negative effect on their environment and often forms an obstacle for the person in question (your core qualities

have become 'too much of a good thing' and you go into overdrive). This is a distortion of the quality, the other side of the coin; your quality becomes a weakness. A few examples are:

- Being an overly organised perfectionist;
- Being very decisive and falling into the trap of becoming pushy;
- Being very confident, going into overdrive and therefore coming across as arrogant instead.
- Being very helpful, going into overdrive and therefore coming across as meddling instead.

Challenges

A challenge is the positive opposite of a pitfall. E.g. for a nagging personality (the pitfall of being decisive), the positive opposite (the challenge) is patience. The core quality and the challenge are complementary qualities. What you want to achieve in order to grow, is to strike a balance between the two. If the challenge is underdeveloped, the core quality must be improved to find the balance. For example: it is not necessary to become less decisive, but to develop more patience, resulting in patient decisiveness without nagging. Thus, the challenge is always supplement to the core quality. It helps to not go into overdrive and plunge into the pitfall.

The challenge provides a balance that will even out your pitfall and/or allergy and will help you determine someone else's core quality. For example, if you think that someone is too thorough and too patient it might well be that this is your challenge (maybe sometimes you can be too pushy?). You can learn a lot from the people that annoy you the most. Turning a source of frustration and stress into a learning opportunity creates new energy and resilience.

Pitfalls of another person: allergies

The core qualities can also be used to identify potential conflicts with the people around you. Just like everyone has his or her core qualities, so does everyone have allergies. The allergy is the direct negative opposite of the core quality and 'too much of a good thing' of the challenge. For example:

- the negative opposite of the core quality 'decisiveness' is 'passiveness'. The more people are confronted with their own allergy, the greater the risk that they dip into to their own pitfall. The decisive person starts nagging in response to too much passiveness in another person.
- if you are very modest and humble, you can be irritated by people who always brag of what they do or have achieved.

The insight you gain through the core quadrants will help you pick up early signals of someone experiencing stress. It is very conceivable that someone who's confronted by his/her own pitfall or allergy becomes stressful. To be able to strengthen the resilience of an individual, you should try to shift focus to their quality or challenge instead. The core quadrants are also very useful when teamwork is required, e.g.:

- Stress arises when an allergy of one team member overlaps with the pitfall of the another.
- Competitive behaviour arises when 2 people in your team have the same pitfall.

Gaining deeper insight into your team's core quadrants can help to recognise and support the team and promote cooperation, and as a result increase its resilience.

Let's take an example. Lisa is a member of staff in your team. She is often praised because she gets things done quickly and effectively. At the same time, she often hears form you that she could be more patient: "Your colleague will come up with a proposal, I truly believe so, if you don't beat her to the punch every time!"
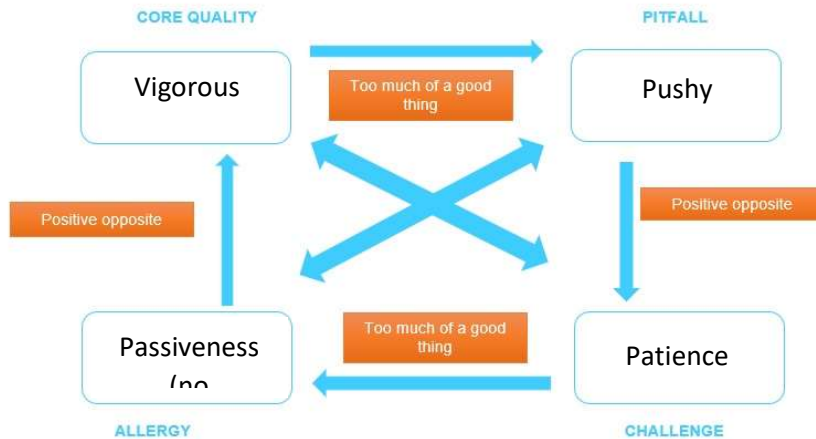
1. Lisa is incredibly powerful/vigorous. This is a core quality.
2. Sometimes she goes into overdrive and becomes pushy. This is the pitfall.
3. Her challenge is the opposite of the quality 'vigorous' which, in this case, may be considered as 'patience' or 'taking a step back'.
4. Her quality is connected to an allergy, in this case 'passiveness' or 'not taking any initiative'

Of course, conflicts in teams do not only arise because of individual differences and because of not aligning to qualities that are our opposites. The sources of conflicts and misunderstandings in teams may be numerous, and sometimes very personal. Sometimes team members accuse each other of not doing a fair share of work, the way of cooperation differs between extraverts and introverts, a project can be badly scheduled, etc. Fixing the problem of individual differences based on personality traits with Ofman works well combined with fixing more structural, general problems like the once mentioned above (e.g. bad scheduling of a project, etc.).

2. Video/webinar

The following videos provide more explanation about the themes related to this toolkit. Some videos show examples, others give a more theoretical explanation. Let yourself be inspired to search for more videos that are linked to this theme.

: theoretical explanation of the Core quadrants in English

: Core qualities and core quadrant interpreted by the author, Daniel Ofman.

3. Tips & Tricks (checklists)

Basic Tips to get started with Core quadrants

How can you easily discover your core qualities, pitfalls, challenges and allergies? The following set of questions will help you fill in the core quadrant more effectively (for yourself and in guidance of others):

1. **Core qualities are found by asking…**
   - What do others appreciate in me/you?
   - What do other people think I am/you are good at?
   - How would I/you describe myself/yourself?
   - What do I/you find obvious?
   - What do I/you do automatically/without thinking and feel others should do too?

2. **Pitfalls are found by asking …**
   - What do other people accuse me/you of?
   - What things that I/you do am I/are you trying to justify for myself/yourself?
   - What do I/you allow others to do wrong, whilst not being able to accept my/your own mistakes?
   - What happens to me/you time and time again?

3. **Challenges are found by asking …**
   - What do I/you miss in myself/yourself?
   - What do other people do which I/you admire them for?
   - What well-intentioned advice do I/you receive from others?

4. **Allergies are found by asking …**
   - What would I/you find horrible if someone else would do it?
   - What do other people feel that I/you should do to put things into perspective?
   - What do I/you (strongly) dislike in other people?
   - What bothers me/you in other people?

An example list of core quadrants as a tool

A list of examples can be very useful if you can't come up with the correct word/term to fill in the core quadrant characteristics. Note: these are only examples and it is important not to copy any of them without thinking it through. What is mentioned in this list as possible core quality, pitfall, allergy and challenge, does not necessarily match with who you are as a person. It is important to ensure that you

recognise yourself in the characteristic and wording chosen. Think about it and use the list for inspiration.

Core Quality	Pitfall	Allergy	Challenge
Adaptability	Submission	Dictatorial	Initiative
Analytical	Distant	Sentimental	Sensitive
Caution	Indecision	Rashness	Agility
Helpful	Sacrifice	Selfishness	Autonomy
Modesty	Invisibility	Arrogant	Profiling
Reliable	Boring	Arbitrary	Innovative
Brevity	Oversimplified	Long-Winded	Tact
Creative	Chaos	Bureaucracy	Discipline
Vigour	Pushy	Passiveness	Patience
Empathy	Sentimental	Distance / selfishness	Considerate
Enthusiasm	Impulsiveness	Pessimism	Realism
Honesty	Direct	Dishonesty	Tact
Flexibility	Fickle / unsteady	Rigidity	Order
Self-disciplined	Rigidity	Chaos	Flexibility
Patient	Passive	Pushy	Vigorous
Obeying	Slavish	Stubborn	Autonomous
Reserved	Distant	Arrogant	Self-confident
Empathy	Sacrifice	Nonchalance	Letting Go
Powerful	Aggressive	Passive	Reserved
Loyalty	Submissive	Disobedient	Critical
Listen	Passiveness	Dominant	Assertiveness
Accuracy	Perfectionism	Chaos	Flexibility
susceptible	Cautious	Unsubtle	Taking a stand
Optimistic	Naivety	Pessimism	Realism
Convincing	Fanatic	Stoical	Listening
Realism	Indifference	Naivety	Open-hearted
Calm	Slow	Wired up	Energetic
Responsibility	Overloaded	Victim	Asking for help
Friendly	Behaving	Ruthless	Unfriendly/rudeness
Generous	Boundless	Selfish	Setting limits
Deliberate	Doubting	Arrogant	Self-esteem
Independent	Lonely	Dependant	Team Work

Self-assured	Arrogant	Moderate	Modest
Careful	Picky	Nonchalance	Looseness
Care	Patronising	Indifference	Letting Go

Tips for when you get stuck in the completion of the core quadrants:

1. **Use your network**

   Ask your colleagues, friends, family… for help. They know you best.

2. **Choose your direction**

   The model can be used in different ways. You don't have to start with defining the core qualities if you find it difficult to identify these for yourself. Many people can define what annoys them in other people, which allows you to define your allergies and will thereby help you to work your way around the core. Start with what you know.

3. **Not me, but rather that of another**

   Try to complete a quadrant for another person before your tackle yours. Most of the time, you can pinpoint someone else's qualities very well. Start there and then continue with your own quadrant.

4. Exercises

The following exercises are meant to help you practice with the tips, tricks and theoretical explanation you've received. You can choose which exercises to work on based on your preferences and the areas you'd like to improve. You don't have to do all of them, so feel free to select the ones you find most useful.

Exercise: Complete the Core quadrants

Before helping and coaching others to complete their core quadrants, it is important that you get enough practice with the different layers of the model. Learning to recognise and correctly place qualities, pitfalls, allergies and challenges, is the first step in that process. In the following exercise you will find 4 combinations of 4 words. Every word represents a core quality, a pitfall, a challenge or an allergy. It is up to you to make the right combinations and put the words in the right place in the quadrant.

Combination 1: interference – independence – helpful – distant/cold

Combination 2: spontaneity – planned – consistent – unpredictable

Combination 3: steadiness – flexibility – rigidity – chaotic

Combination 4: accurate – creative – picky – careless

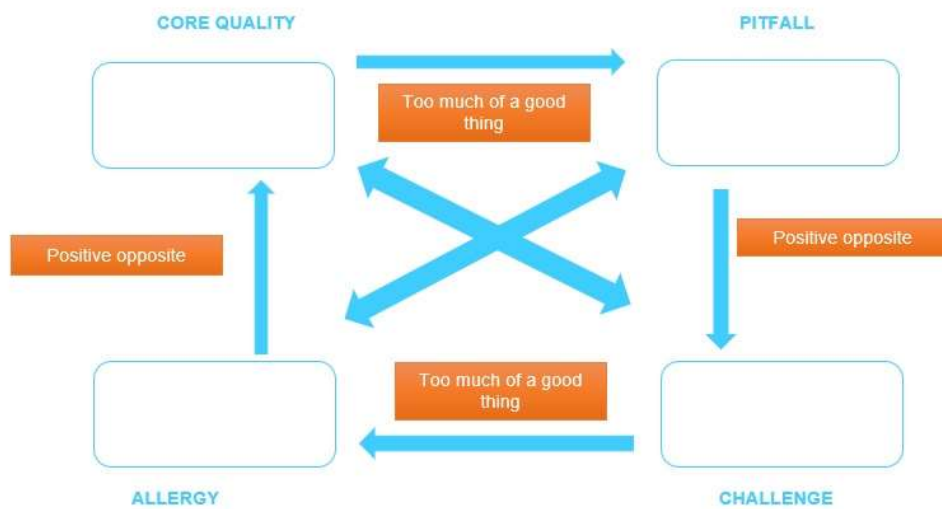| Quality		Pitfall		Challenge		Allergy	

1				
2				
3				
4				

Solution:

	Quality	Pitfall	Challenge	Allergy
1	Helpful	Interference	Independence	Distant/cold
2	Spontaneity	Unpredictable	Consistent	Planned
3	Flexibility	Chaotic	Steadiness	Rigidity
4	Accurate	Picky	Creative	Careless

Exercise: Guess who…Which quadrant am I?

As a manager, you often have a good understanding of the qualities and pitfalls of your employees. But you too will be confronted with allergies: things that you find annoying about other employees or even other supervisors. It is therefore important to further investigate these allergies and to uncover their hidden qualities. That's why we wrote some example cases, each of which contains a hidden quality. Can you complete the quadrant?

Assignment 1

Case 1: Imagine that an employee in your team tends to create problems and tension every now and again. He does not follow orders and just acts in a way that suits him best. Which quadrant is behind all this?

Solution Case 1:

- Core Quality: being autonomous
- Pitfall: slavishly/depending
- Challenge: obedient/compliant
- Allergy: stubborn

Case 2: Imagine that an employee in your team stands for what he believes in and says things to your face (in an appropriate and inappropriate manner). This bothers both you and the team, which regularly results in tensions. Which quadrant is possibly hidden?
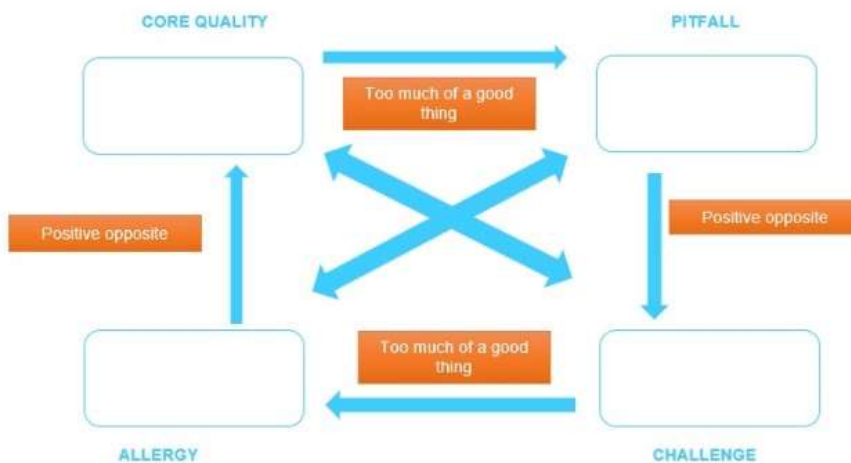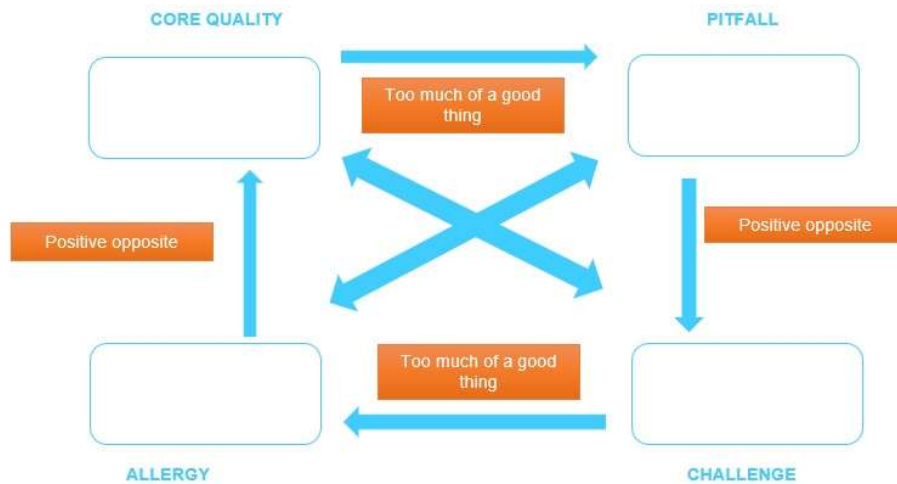

Solution Case 2:

- Core Quality: assertive
- Pitfall: domination/arrogant – direct

Case 3: Imagine that an employee in your team always hands in his work far too late. He misses deadlines, but his work has a good quality. Which quadrant is behind all this?
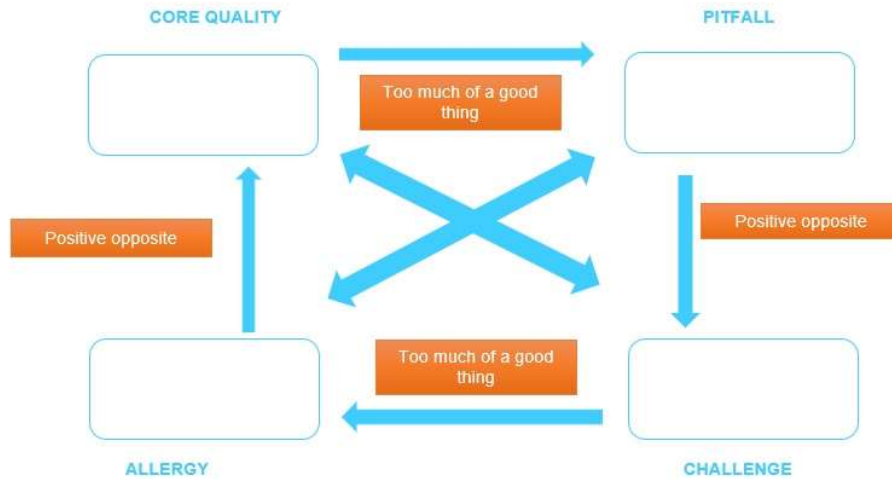
Assignment 2

Now look at the allergies you encounter in your own work situation. Try to complete the quadrant. What can you learn from this person/these persons?

Exercise: And I, as a manager, what are my qualities and pitfalls?

Before you coach others with the core quadrants, it is useful to go through the process yourself. You will learn what is easy to define and what is more difficult to pinpoint. Once you have a deeper understanding of the core quadrants, you can go through exactly the same steps with your employee who is experiencing stress, problems with others, or something else related to the core quadrants.

- Step 1: Start by making an inventory of your strengths. Write down everything that pops up in your mind.
- Step 2: Select the 3 core qualities that define you the most.
- Step 3: Try to make your own core quadrant.
- Step 4: Was this difficult? Use the 'Tips & Tricks (checklist)' as a tool and ask yourself the questions listed to uncover the different elements of your quadrant.
- Step 5: Check your answers with someone who knows you well – does he/she recognise you in your quadrant?

Exercise: Success Story

If an employee is stressed, it is not always easy to immediately determine their core qualities. Therefore, we want to approach it in a different way and help you to help others identify the qualities they possess. Behind every success that we experience in our lives, there are one or more qualities. In addition, talking about these successes creates energy. That is why we will look for your own success story and/or the success story of your employee in this exercise. You can also involve the entire team and bring out their success stories (as individuals and/or as part of a team). We explain how you can approach the various options step by step.

What is the game plan?

Yourself and/or a co-worker:

> **Step 1:** think of a situation in which you found yourself to be successful or ask an employee to do this for himself. This can be about anything and can also be very small. For example, a

project that you have delivered in a timely manner, a result that you have achieved with a team… Try to do this as concrete as possible. Below you can find some extra questions to help explain your situation as clear as possible.

- ✓ Who was involved?
- ✓ Where did the situation occur?
- ✓ What was your role in this situation?
- ✓ What were your tasks?
- ✓ How did you do it?
- ✓ What have you done in a concrete way?
- ✓ What was the result of your actions?
- ✓ How did other people react to it?

Step 2: re-read what you have written. What quality has ensured your success? Write this down.

The team:

Step 1: Explain you are going to do an exercise involving success stories.

- Give the following instruction: "*You are going to individually think of a situation where you found yourself to be successful.*
- Present the STAR-model to your team. Explain the different steps and tell them that they are individually drawing up a success story.
- Remind them that being successful can be defined in different ways, it can include every (small) success you ever achieved. For example, a project that you have delivered in a timely manner, a result that you have achieved with a team, etc.
- Tell them to write down their success as concrete as possible.

Below they can find some extra questions to help explain their situation as clear as possible.

- ✓ Who was involved?
- ✓ Where did the situation occur?
- ✓ What was your role in this situation?
- ✓ What were your tasks?
- ✓ How did you do it?
- ✓ What have you done in a concrete way?
- ✓ What was the result of your actions?
- ✓ How did other people react to it?

Step 2: if employees are ready, place them in pairs. Give everyone a post-it note or a piece of paper and let them tell their success story to each other.

Step 3: the partner writes down what qualities they see in the story of the other person. Do this for both employees. At the end, ask your team to share the different qualities with each other.

Step 4: you can repeat this exercise several times with multiple success stories. Make sure switch up the teams every time

In the introduction we stated that "if you can express and use [your core] qualities in your job and/or your daily life, chances are that you feel good about yourself and what you are doing". Therefore, we want to introduce this reflection exercise.

1. Make a list of your employees, write down what you see as their qualities.
2. Ask yourself the following critical questions:
   - Does their work sufficiently reflect their qualities?
   - How do I ensure that they will be able to use their qualities?
   - Which kind of support do we as an organisation or I as supervisor offer so that employees can work on their challenges?
   - What other tasks/jobs are available or more suited to bring out their qualities?

Exercise: Core quadrants for collaborations

It is inevitable that some characters within a team clash with each other. That can quickly lead to frustration and tension. In a conflict it is often the case that two people are stuck in their pitfalls at that moment. In this situation, it is very important to stay focused on each other's qualities that are hidden behind the pitfalls. Communication about each other challenges instead of each other's pitfalls may be the solution. The dual core quadrant below can give more insight into the development of the frustrations and help you focus on something else.

So just a quick example. The quadrant of person X is blue, the quadrant of person Y is green. This dual quadrant shows us that the allergy (passiveness) of person X is in fact the pitfall of person Y.
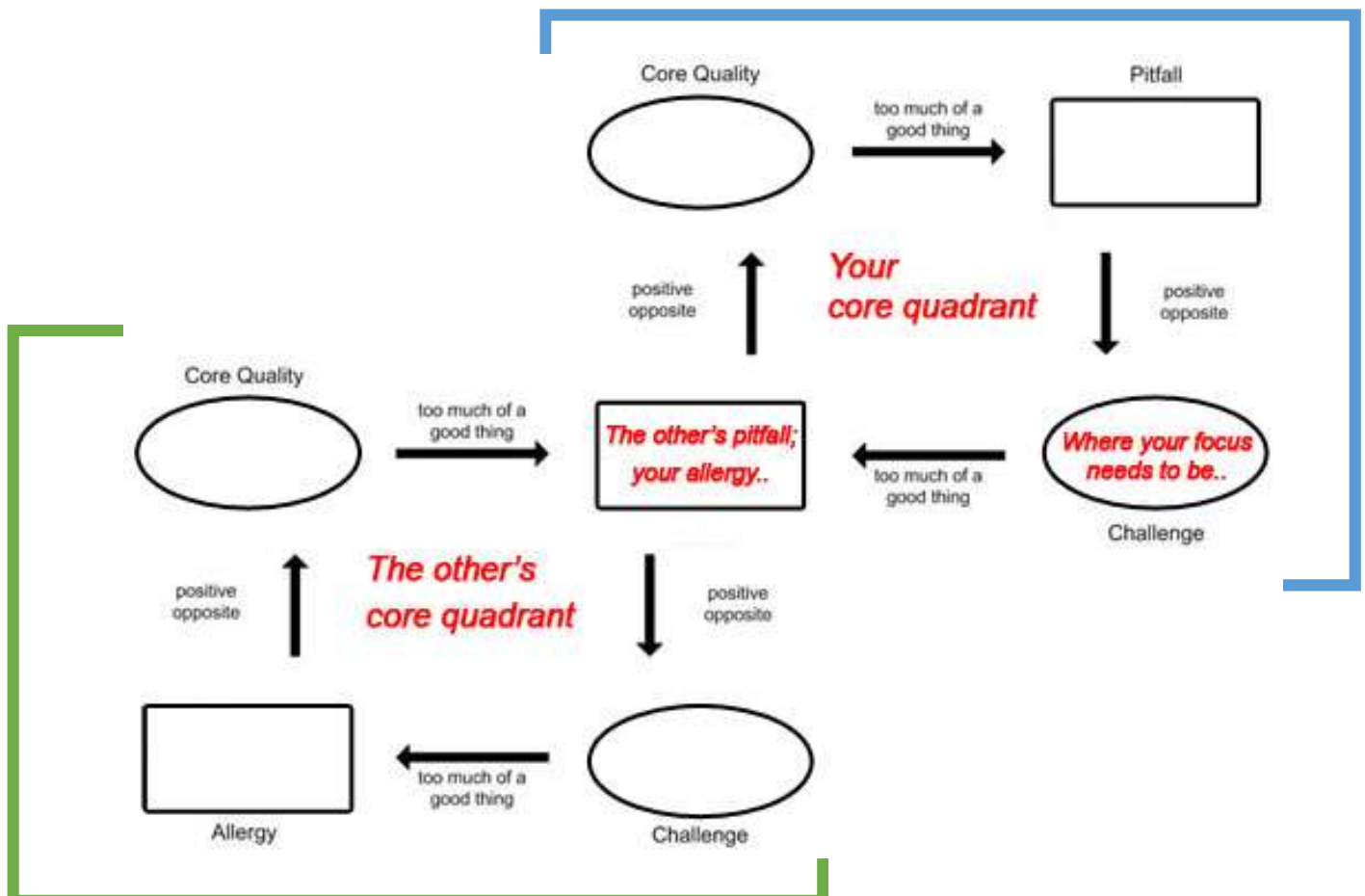
Imagine if Lien (person X in blue) has 'decisiveness' as a *quality*. This can sometimes make her come across as pushy: she will act quickly and doesn't always know when to stop. This takes away the opportunity for others to react or maybe things don't go fast enough according to her opinion. Patience and asking for the opinion of others can be her *challenge*. Now, it is common for energetic, decisive people to be irritated by people who are passive and do not take initiative. This is Johan's (person Y in green) *pitfall*, his *quality* being 'thoughtfulness'. He will think longer about things, weighing pros and cons and his *challenge* lies in being more pro-active.

When Lien and Johan focus more on each other's qualities and challenges, they can help and learn from each other. It is therefore recommended to openly discuss Core quadrants and allergies with your team. **This allows you to improve cooperation**.

Now let's get you started. In the next exercise we present 2 cases. The first case concerns an employee and her manager. The second case concerns 2 employees who recently worked together. Your job is to find the four elements (core quality, pitfall, challenge and allergy) to fill in Ofman's quadrant. The example above can help you if you are stuck. And remember: the pitfall of one person is the allergy of another.

Case 1: Petra, the employee in this case, is always very helpful. She regularly informs her colleagues how things are going. She offers her help, whether appropriate or not. When she thinks someone is having trouble with something, she is the first to solve it. She is annoyed with her manager, John, who is totally uninterested. He leaves everyone to their fate and does not even see what happens in the department. Petra has already indicated this several times, but John gives her the feeling that she is a meddler. Colleagues also complain about her well-meant but unsolicited advice.
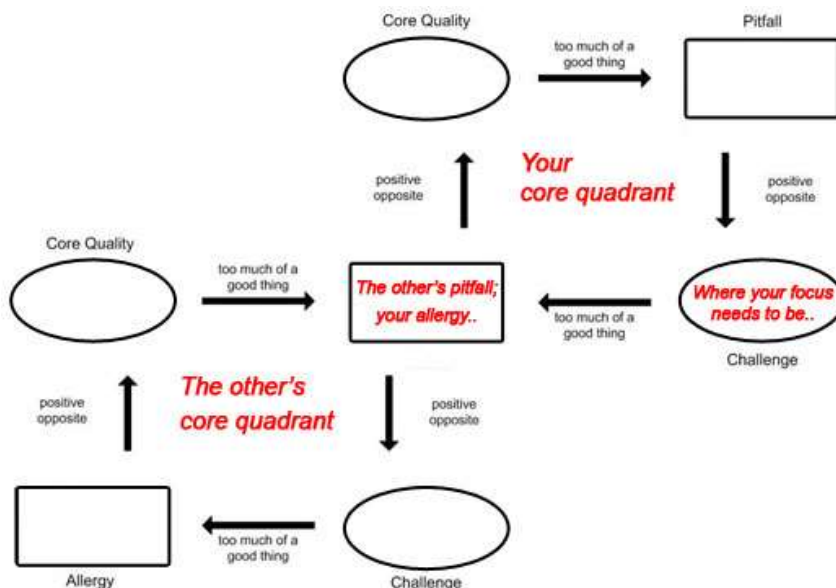
	Petra	John
Core quality	Helpful	Adding perspective
Pitfall	Nosy	Indifference
Challenge	Letting go	Involvement
Allergy	Indifference	Fanatics

Explanation:

The strength of the employee is helpfulness and that of the manager that he can leave matters alone. When the employee knows that the manager delegates without being indifferent, she can trust him more. When the supervisor knows that someone keeps an eye on things and involves him, then that is a reassuring thought. If they make good agreements about this, their teamwork would improve and focus on qualities and challenges instead of pitfalls and allergies.

Case 2: Kim has been in your organisation for a while. She knows what to do and does not doubt herself, especially in contact with customers, which is pleasant for them. Colleagues, on the other hand, sometimes experience this differently. They find her a bit supercilious when she comes up with her ideas and advice. She often says how and what someone should do, since she feels she knows best. June has a hard time dealing with this. She has been working in the company for 2 months now and does not assert herself as much as Kim does. She does not rise herself to a position of prominence and prefers to keep things to herself if she has done something right.
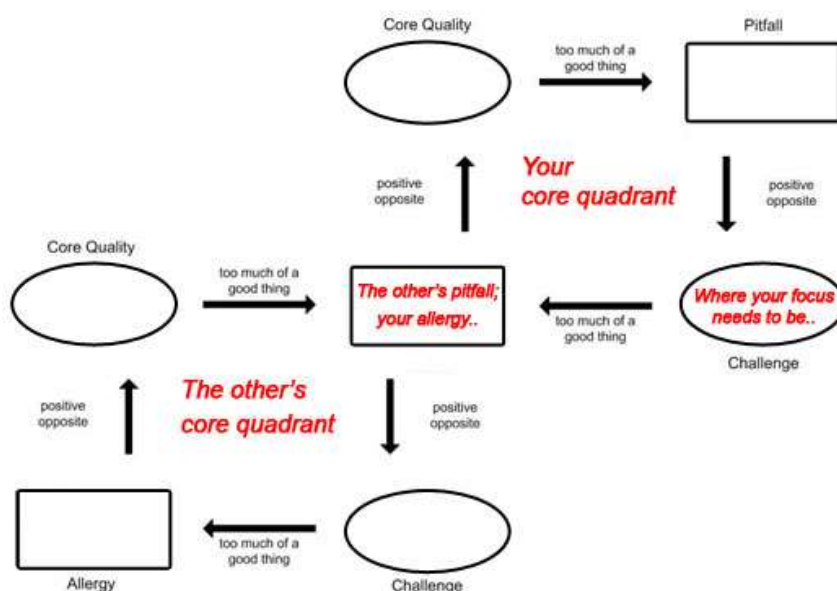
Solution:

	Kim	June
Core quality	Self-assurance	Modesty
Pitfall	Arrogance	Mediocrity
Challenge	Modesty, discretion	Profiling
Allergy	Mediocrity	Arrogance

Explanation:

Kim's strength is her self-assurance, June's strength is that she is more modest. When Kim would take June more often to the forefront, simply by saying (without bragging) what went well and what her approach would be, then Kim would respect June more. If June would know that Kim mentions her ideas to help her, without wanting to impose them, she would also feel more comfortable to rely on her expertise.

GROW Model

5. Why this tool?

In business, you often encounter problems. As a manager, you are strongly focused on solving these problems and you are most probably convinced that the best way to do this is by analysing the problem: what/who caused it and how did it happen? It seems as if you will only be able to find the solution through a thorough analysis of the problem. You're not the only one; employees try to solve their problems this way too.
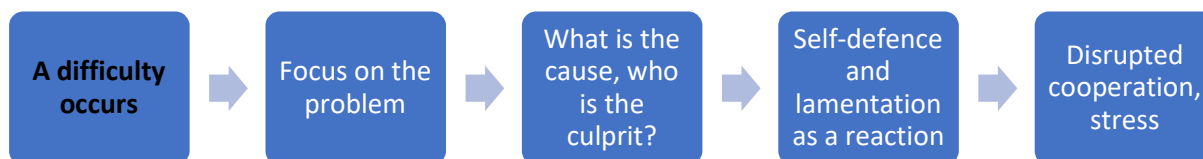
An example: *Mark is complaining to Ben about Helen, the manager. He is tired of always being criticised on the way he works and being told what to do. Ben asks: "What happened?" And Mark tells a story that Ben recognises all too well.*
Helen has criticised Mark on the way he handled an important task that she entrusted him with. Mark tells Ben that the criticism was completely unfair. Ben immediately starts telling Mark what he thinks of Helen. And together they start complaining… They ask themselves why Helen reacts the way she does. Perhaps she wants to assert her authority because she wants to prove herself as a female manager? Or maybe she can't handle her job and takes it out on them? Could it be that she is just not suitable as a manager or she should have another occupation that suits her better?

This conversation helps to gets things off their chests, but it doesn't help them to make a change. Quite the contrary; Mark will be even more annoyed by Helen's traits and oppose her criticism more strongly than before. From molehill to mountain in only a few seconds…

What is going on? Both Mark and Ben have a problem-oriented approach. When we focus on problems, we:
• Stick to habits
• Are analysis-oriented: what is the causing the problem?
• Focus on failures: what went wrong? What doesn't work?
• Focus on the past
• Use negative and loaded language: must, be right, not, never, everything ...
• Refer to/blame others or circumstances
• Define what we do NOT want

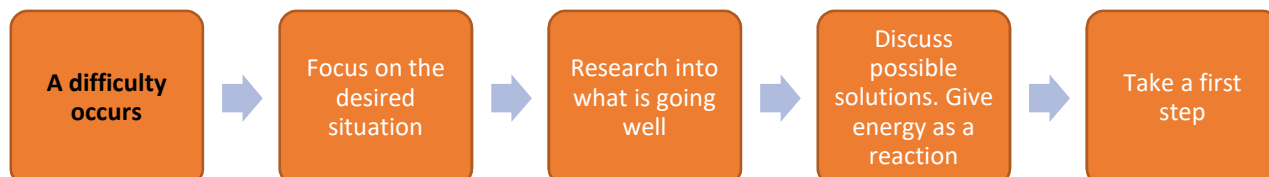| A difficulty occurs	→	Focus on the problem	→	What is the cause, who is the culprit?	→	Self-defence and lamentation as a reaction	→	Disrupted cooperation, stress

The result?

A problem-oriented approach puts people in a negative mood and deprives them of their courage and creativity to resiliently provide an answer. Such an environment stimulates disrupted conversations, pessimism and victimhood.

How can we pave the way to a different approach?

By shifting out focus from a difficulty/problem to a solution. In order to apply this effectively, we propose the use of the GROW model. The GROW model is based on the philosophy of solution-oriented thinking. This means that we focus on:

1. The desired situation (instead of the problem)
2. Achieved successes (instead of mistakes and failures)
3. Competences and opportunities (instead of weaknesses and limitations)
4. Successes (instead of a problem analysis)
5. Going forward step by step (instead of taking a big leap)

A difficulty occurs	→	Focus on the desired situation	→	Research into what is going well	→	Discuss possible solutions. Give energy as a reaction	→	Take a first step

Back to the example: *What if Ben would have asked Mark: "What do you want instead?"*

Mark: "I wish she would show more respect and trust me because I really deserve to be trusted."

Ben: "How would you notice such a change in behaviour?"

Mark: "I would notice it if she would give me more time to let me handle things my way, if she would relinquish control. She would also show more respect by pointing out what she appreciates about the results I achieve instead of merely pointing out where there's room for improvement.

Ben: "Has she done this in the past? If only once…?"

Mark: "Well, maybe a few weeks ago…"

At this point, the conversation takes a different turn. Mark will no longer talk about the things that he doesn't like or want, but he will constructively state what he does want. This changes the tone of the conversation. It also increases the possibility that Mark starts seeing the things that he can do and how he can do them. A situation that seemed frustrating, problematic and hopeless, can now be

reversed. That's why it is important to focus on what Mark did differently when Helen showed him respect and appreciated his work. The conversation continues:

Ben: "What did you do differently?"

Mark: "I might have given her more information about the state of affairs, how I wanted to tackle things, …"

Ben: "Anything else?"

Mark: "… I remember that in the beginning, before she became a manager, we talked more. We also talked about private matters. Now we don't do that anymore.

Ben: "Is there anything you could do to improve you working relationship with Helen?"

Mar: "Yes, maybe I can have a chat with her tomorrow when she goes for a coffee. And maybe I can tell her more about work, so she can be sure that I'm on top of things. I should give that a try…"
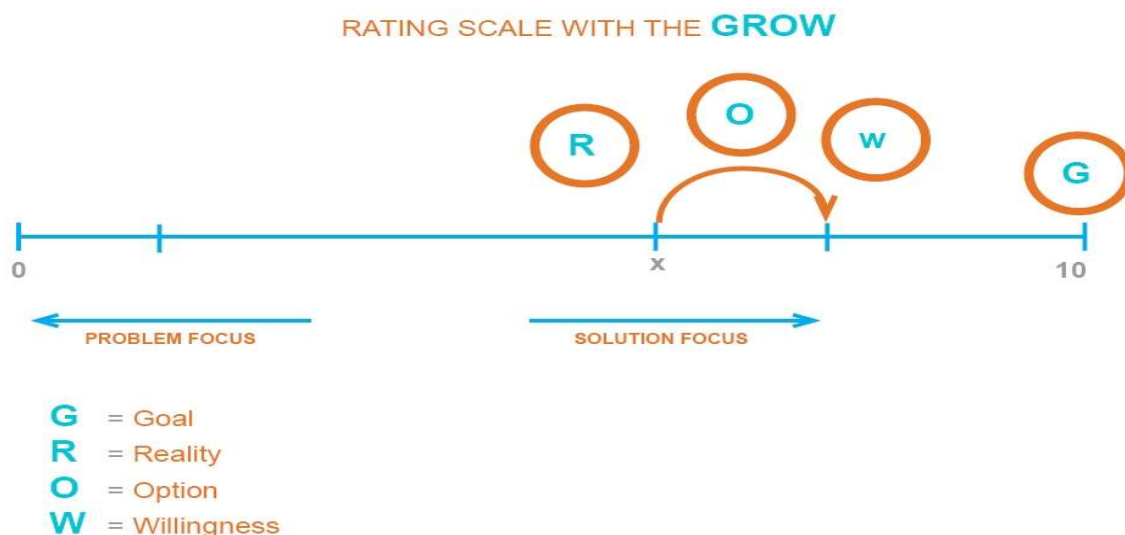
To present this visually, we can use the GROW-model. Every letter stands for a stage in this solution-oriented approach:

G – **Goal**: the goal that you want to reach, the changes you would like to see, the desired situation.

R – **Reality or current situation**: current facts. We focus on the positive facts that brought about the current situation, on successes, on the things that were done and the reason they went well.

O – **Options**: small steps forward to reach the intended goal. We build a bridge between reality and the desired situation. A first small step usually leads to another, which leads to yet another… It's a domino effect, an accumulation of changes. It's important to stay in the brainstorm stage for long enough and not take action yet.

W – **Willingness**: in this stage we consciously choose which options will be implemented first; we define how much faith we have in each option, and what support is still needed. It's all about the way forward.

RATING SCALE WITH THE **GROW**

PROBLEM FOCUS   **SOLUTION FOCUS**

G = Goal
R = Reality
O = Option
W = Willingness

As a manager, you can use this model when you:

- have a one-on-one meeting that gets a negative feel to it;

- notice that your team has many problem-oriented conversations;

- want to give off positive energy to employees who feel stuck in their job and you want to inspire them to take action;

- want to increase resilience by stimulating creativity and out-of-the-box thinking.

6. Video/webinar

Video 1: This video takes a manager through the process of the GROW Model. In about 7 minutes the video illustrates the various stages.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6f3X2PEsV-Q

Video 2: let's look at the GROW-model in practice.

Imagine the following situation: Laura (L) and Helen (H) are working together in a conference room.

• L: How are you doing?

• H: To be honest, not so good.

• L: Oh, what's going on?

• H: I cannot manage all my tasks. It's just too much! Can we look at all my tasks together and see if we can delegate something?

• L: I hear that you feel you have to work too much. Before we think about solutions, I want to examine your situation a bit more. Can you describe me how you plan your day?

• H: I start my day with creating a task list and then give priority to each task. And then I just start with the most important tasks.

• L: That is already a good start of the day.

• H: It starts well but then things go wrong. I never complete all tasks that are on my list.

• L: What would you like to achieve on such a day then?

• H: Oh, if I could just finish some more tasks in peace.

• L: What do you mean by in peace' and 'more'? Can you be more concrete?

• H: Actually, now that I think about it, I get disturbed a lot: colleagues need help and have questions, phone calls from important customers, etc.

• L: And how do you deal with these disturbances?

• H: What do you mean? I just try to answer the questions and help our colleagues and customers.

• L: So, if I understand correctly, one of the reasons that make it harder for you to manage all your tasks is the amount of disruptions you have. And that you immediately respond to these questions.

• H: Yes, of course. What should I do instead? I can't not help my colleagues and our customers.

• L: helping others is important to you.

• H: Yes, very important.

• L: more important than the task with the highest priority on your task list?

• H: If you say so ...

• L: silence

• H: I really like to help others. I believe that the willingness to help is very important in all relationships.

• L: And I believe this is a very good feature. And I personally think that this is one of the reasons why customers and colleagues like to work with you. So, what you actually want to achieve is a better balance between 'completing your own tasks' and 'helping others'. Is that right?

• H: yes, actually. That's exactly it.

• L: when did you manage to reach that balance in the past?

• H: Euhm, I'll have to think about that.

• L: silence.

• H: I think it was last month, when I had to work on an important project with very strict deadlines. I communicated this to colleagues by letting them know I was very busy.

• L: that is already very good. I'm glad you did that. How did your colleagues actually deal with this? Because I can imagine that you are not the only one who is struggling with this issue.

• H: No, that is true. I think they clearly work with blocks and do not cram their whole day with too many to do's. They are more selective in order to make their to do list more feasible. And also, Liesbeth clearly indicates when she is and isn't available, so that we can bundle questions to ask her and so on.

• L: and which of the options that Liesbeth and your other colleagues implement would you also want to try to achieve a better balance? What do you think works for you?

• H: maybe I should start with putting a little less on my to do list and indicate that they can combine their questions and I'll make sure to block out some time to answer them.

• L: let's start with that and see how that works. Perhaps in a second phase we can see whether it is really necessary to make changes to your tasks.

• H: I think that's a good idea. Thank you!

7. Tips & tricks (checklists)

Questions you can ask to start a conversation

1. What would be useful for us to discuss?
2. What brings you here today?
3. With what purpose did you come here today?
4. What would make this conversation worthwhile for you?
5. Before we start, may I ask: what is going (a bit) better at this moment?
6. What went better between the moment you decided something had to change and now?

Tips for a positive attitude in a conversation

1. Be cooperative and interested: you are looking for a solution together. Your solution may not turn out to be the best. The basic idea behind this, is that nobody knows best.
2. Listen carefully, summarise regularly and ask solution-oriented questions. Advice and tips can be given, not imposed
3. Give compliments, show your appreciation for their work, and ask the other person to compliment him/herself

G: Clarify the goal/desired situation

- What do you want to achieve? What would be the result?
- What should improve in the future?
- What should the situation be like for you to be 'satisfied'?
- What do you want instead of the problem?

R: What is the reality/current situation?

- From your point of view, when is it going better? When did it go better for you?
- Which aspects of the current situation should be retained?
- How much impact on and control over this situation do you currently have?
- What have you done so far?
- Who is involved? What are their roles?
- What is already working? What is already present?
- What progress have you made? How did we/you succeed?

O: What are the options?

- What alternatives are available?
- How well or how thorough will others be able to solve the problem?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of the various options?
- How easy or hard are these options for you personally?
- What will you do when the problem is solved?
- What would you like to do differently compared to what you have already done?

W: What is your first step towards the solution/the way forward?

- Which option would please you the most?
- Which option will you try out?

- How will you know if it really works?
- Who are the important players that will determine the end result?
- How are you feeling?
- How can I (the employer/manager) continue to support this initiative?

Tips for smoothening the conversation as a whole… solution-focused language and questions

1. Ask open questions. Beware of asking 'why' because it causes a defence mechanism, rationalisations and arguments.
    - Yes, and HOW are we going to tackle this?
    - Yes, and WHAT means do you need?
    - Yes, and WHEN did this work?
    - Yes, and WHAT is the first step we can take?
2. Listen to their interests and their story: do not correct or help
    - Use positive, hopeful and future-oriented language
    - Replace the word 'but' with the word 'and'
    - Use information that is based on facts
    - Speak in terms of presence rather than absence
    - Use positive words such as 'successful', 'add', etc.
3. Give compliments or let people point out good things
    - I admire the way you continued to do your work under such difficult circumstances. How do you do that?
    - How can you face such difficult situations every day? How do you tackle that?
    - What helps you to keep going?
    - How did you manage to sustain your high-quality delivery before you were absent from work?
    - How did you manage to...?
    - What compliments do you get from (colleagues, friends, ...)?
    - When are you really proud of and satisfied with your work?

Tips for making the GROW model succeed in practice

1. **Present it visually**: if you meet your employee(s) to tackle a problem, draw the model on a large piece of paper. Fill in the information you've gathered or let the employee fill it in. Always check if everything is clear before proceeding to a next stage.
2. **Ask for further explanation**: listen carefully to what is being said and ask for further explanation if not everything is clear. For example, you can ask: "What do you mean by this?"
3. **Don't decide for someone else**: give thought to what something means for someone and don't interpret things. How you define something is not necessarily the same as how your employee does. When he/she addresses the need for better communication, aim to learn more about the definition of 'better communication' for that person. Try to get as much out of the person as possible: the more you suggest things/solutions, the quicker there will be

resistance or 'as if-behaviour' in which someone just nods yes and still doesn't change his/her behaviour.

4. Concentrate on the desired situation and **make it concrete**. Try to make words like 'more, less, better' more concrete: when exactly is it less or more or better for him/her?

5. **Use positive language**: change 'what someone doesn't want' into 'what someone wants'.

6. **Spend enough time talking through the desired situation**: ask enough questions (what do you mean by that? What does that look like?). Make sure it is a desired situation that revolves around the person himself and that he / she can + WILL influence:

   a. Own behaviour in contrast to the behaviour of others and their environment

   b. Future in contrast to past

7. **Ask one question at a time** and leave a silence after asking your question: people cannot always answer immediately and this way of looking at a problem is often 'new' to others. Although this may feel 'uncomfortable', it is important that you give others space and time to answer.

8. **Be sufficiently appreciative**: confirm the good things in the story, however small they may be.

Tips for more resilience in your team and individuals

1. During a meeting, ask questions that make others think creatively about the things that will improve the organisation, your department, your customers or your team;

2. If you have the opportunity, talk about people's contributions to a solution or success and show your appreciation explicitly;

3. Point out the positive changes that you notice on a regular basis;

4. If there is a lot of talk about problems in your team, recognise these problems and invite your colleagues to talk about possible changes and improvements;

5. Approach the quieter people in your team directly and invite them to share their opinions too;

6. Show an interest in new projects and ideas during informal moments.

Tips: dealing with lasting problem-oriented resistance

In practice, as a manager, you will notice that it will not always be easy to get people out of problem-oriented thinking. As a human being, as an employee, as a manager, we are very much focused on negativity. We often hear ourselves or others say 'I have everything to be happy and yet I do not feel it...'. How is that possible?

Research shows that we believe that if we focus on the negative and try to take it away, we will be happier and more resilient. Nothing could be further from the truth: being happy and resilient and being unhappy are essentially 2 separate meters.

Working on your problems does not help you become happier and more resilient, it needs to be combined with a focus on what you already have and where you want to take that. Happiness is in a person's control and requires a different plan. This plan consists of 5 steps:

1. Positive emotions: look for positive emotions in yourself, in private life or at the workplace. For example, by doing something for a colleague that he/she did not expect or explicitly ask for.
2. Attention: focus on what you are doing. Find things that you can lose yourself in or tasks that require your full attention. Live in the here and now.
3. Relationships: caring about and working with others with a sense of reciprocity is paramount.
4. Give meaning: gain insight into what is valuable and what is not.
5. Realisation: what do I want to achieve? This can be done in different areas: personal growth, helping people, material gain, social progress, etc. It is about something that one does.

As a manager, it is therefore also important to give this message to your employees. Tell them that being happy at work does not always mean that they must take away the negative things. The trick is to do more for the 'happiness meter' and thus to try and integrate the 5 steps into their daily activities. You can try to make a 'tailor-made plan' with them that matches who they are, what they have experienced, where they currently stand and where they want to go.

8. Exercises

Exercise: from problem-oriented to solution-oriented

Recognising a problem-oriented focus and approach is an important step towards the development of a solution-oriented language. The use of this language will create an energy that will have a major impact on resilience enhancement, creativity and the motivation of employees. Therefore, in this exercise you will try to identify the problem-oriented questions (P) and replace them with solution-oriented questions (S). Read the dialogues and complete the framework.

Case 1: Employee Rachel complains to her manager Jeff about new employee Ellen.

Dialogue between Rachel and Jeff	P or S?	Transformation to S
Rachel: "Jeff, I have to talk to you about something. Lately, the work pressure is no longer sustainable. The new employee, Ellen, who I am training is still making a lot of mistakes and needs more support than expected. It really agitates me and every day I go home more and more stressed."		
Jeff: "Yes, I know. I also expected that she would have made more progress after 2 months. Why does Ellen make so many mistakes?"		
Rachel: "I don't know, she just doesn't understand what I'm saying and keeps asking questions about things that I've explained several times."		
Jeff: ''Ok, but what exactly doesn't she understand?''?'		

Rachel: "She doesn't understand how to prepare the files correctly, she keeps asking questions about the planning system and is still registering customer information to the wrong accounts. And don't get me started about how she speaks to customers."		
Jeff: "That does seem difficult to deal with. What have you already done to help her?"		
Rachel: "I've explained everything to her beforehand and when she finished a task I've clearly pointed out the mistakes she made and which points to focus on. I also gave her our script with all the procedures and referred her to our online system. It can't be that difficult."		
Jeff: "And apparently that did not help. Well, we will give her another month and then we'll see. You can also ask Hilde to explain some tasks?"		
Rachel: "But Hilde is too busy! I can't possibly do that to her."		
Jeff: "And why would Hilde refuse? If I were you, I would ask her. Tell her that I said she has to do it."		
Rachel: "Well, okay then."		

Case 2: Recently, Bart, the manager of a successful car business, has noticed that his employee Lisa is drowning in her work. The quality of her work is dropping, and her sales are reducing. She mentioned this in a previous interview with Bart and said she can no longer cope with the pressure. Today she enters Bart's office and gives him a detailed description of her frustrations and problems.

Dialogue between Lisa and Bart	*P or S?*	*Transformation tot S*
Lisa: "Bart, I don't know what to do anymore. After our previous meeting, the situation has not improved at all. I've tried even harder to finish my work and I don't even take the time to have lunch with colleagues. I simply don't know what I can do to get my work done and also meet the standards. Pfff."		
Bart: Ok, and what exactly still needs to be done?		
Lisa: "I still have to make 5 quotations for customers. I have to close some sales. I still haven't had time get up to speed on the functions of the new product, the motorhomes. I still have to prepare that client visit… And my paper work, when will I have time to do that? God, when am I going to do all these things!?"		
Bart: "Why is it that, even with the extra time you spend at work, you have not been able to finish your tasks?' I often see you working overtime… Of course, that is not a healthy situation..."		
Lisa: "I've just lost my grip... what should I do first? Things also take longer because of the new laws and requirements … customers are complaining more, or they want more time to think things through, they often want even more information... that's why I don't succeed ... there are always		

unexpected events.”		
Bart: *“I assume this hasn't always been the case. In the past, you did control the situation and you did succeed, right?”'*		
Lisa: *“Yes, that's true. I think my planning was a bit more logical before. But those unexpected reactions from customers will always interfere, even with an adjusted planning”*		
Bart: *‘That might be. But maybe you can ask Mark how he handles things. It might help.”*		
Lisa: *“I could do that. But bear in mind that his work method is different from mine. And he doesn't have the same tasks.”*		
Bart: *“You can always ask for his advice. Will you keep me posted?”*		
Lisa: *“Ehm, yes, I will. I'll see when I can talk to him.”*		

Solution case 1:

Dialogue between Rachel and Jeff	*P or S?*	*Transformation to S*
Rachel: *“Jeff, I have to talk to you about something. Lately, the work pressure is no longer sustainable. The new employee, Ellen, who I am training is still making a lot of mistakes and needs more support than expected. It really agitates me and every day I go home more and more stressed.”*		
Jeff: *"Yes, I know. I also expected that she would have made more progress after 2 months. Why does Ellen make so many mistakes?"*	*P*	*What do you want to achieve? What would you like to change?*
Rachel: *“I don't know, she just doesn't understand what I'm saying and keeps asking questions about things that I've explained several times.”*		
Jeff: *''Ok, but what exactly doesn't she understand?''?'*	*P*	*Where and when does she seem to understand things?*
Rachel: *“She doesn't understand how to prepare the files correctly, she keeps asking questions about the planning system and is still registering customer information to the wrong accounts. And don't get me started about how she speaks to customers.”*		
Jeff: *“That does seem difficult to deal with. What have you already done to help her?”*	*S*	
Rachel: *“I've explained everything to her beforehand and when she finished a task I've clearly pointed out the mistakes she made and which points to focus on. I also gave her our script with all the procedures and referred her to our online system. It can't be that difficult.”*		
Jeff: *“And apparently that did not help. Well, we will give her another month and then we'll see. You can also ask Hilde to explain some tasks?”*	*P*	*What else could you try doing? How did you successfully train people in the past?*
Rachel: *“But Hilde is too busy! I can't possibly do that to her.”*		

Jeff: "And why would Hilde refuse? If I were you, I would ask her. Tell her that I said she has to do it."	P	Can Hilde help you with other things? Which tasks can you hand over that won't be too much of a burden to her?
Rachel: "Well, okay then."		

Solution case 2:

Dialogue between Lisa and Bart	P or S?	Transformation tot S
Lisa: "Bart, I don't know what to do anymore. After our previous meeting, the situation has not improved at all. I've tried even harder to finish my work and I don't even take the time to have lunch with colleagues. I simply don't know what I can do to get my work done and also meet the standards. Pfff."		
Bart: Ok, and what exactly still needs to be done?	P	Imagine things were the same as before, what would be different from now? When will you be satisfied?
Lisa: "I still have to make 5 quotations for customers. I have to close some sales. I still haven't had time get up to speed on the functions of the new product, the motorhomes. I still have to prepare that client visit… And my paper work, when will I have time to do that? God, when am I going to do all these things!?"		
Bart: "Why is it that, even with the extra time you spend at work, you have not been able to finish your tasks?' I often see you working overtime… Of course, that is not a healthy situation..."	P	What would you like to tackle first? What is, for you, the most import thing to do right now?
Lisa: "I've just lost my grip... what should I do first? Things also take longer because of the new laws and requirements … customers are complaining more, or they want more time to think things through, they often want even more information... that's why I don't succeed ... there are always unexpected events."		
Bart: "I assume this hasn't always been the case. In the past, you did control the situation and you did succeed, right?"'	S	
Lisa: "Yes, that's true. I think my planning was a bit more logical before. But those unexpected reactions from customers will always interfere, even with an adjusted planning"		
Bart: 'That might be. But maybe you can ask Mark how he handles things. It might help."	P	How did you deal with it before? How did you handle (difficult) clients in the past?
Lisa: "I could do that. But bear in mind that his work method is different from mine. And he doesn't		

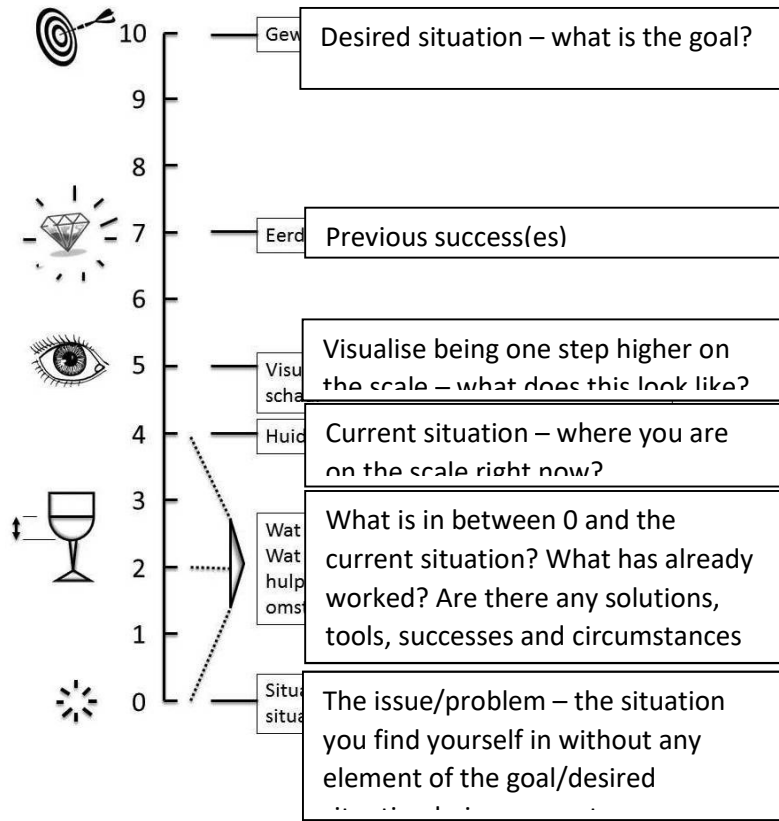|		
have the same tasks."		
Bart: *"You can always ask for his advice. Will you keep me posted?"*	*P*	*Are there things he can help you with?*
Lisa: *"Ehm, yes, I will. I'll see when I can talk to him."*		

Exercise: you need to grow first ... before you let others grow

To know what it's like for your employees to get guidance through the GROW Model, it's important to experience it for yourself. It will make it possible to get familiar with the questions, to experience the impact, to spot difficulties within yourself and possibly within others. Preparation is an absolute must.

Try to fill in the following exercise. The goal is to go through the different stages of the GROW-model step by step and to make sure every step is finished before moving on. Phase 1 is the Goal, Phase 2 the Reality, Phase 3 are the different Options and phase 4 is the Way Forward.
Below, you'll find is a short step-by-step plan that might help you.

- Step 1: Write down a problem that you've encountered and that you would like to solve. For example: you are facing work pressure that is too high.
- Step 2: Once you've written everything down, reread it. Start with phase 1; defining the Goal. Think of 1 question that you can ask yourself after rereading your situation/problem that can help you define what you want + what your goal is regarding your example and write it down (you can use the checklist for inspiration).
- Step 3: Write down the answer to your question. Once you've put everything on paper, reread it again (if necessary) and think of a possible next question in case you feel that you have not yet completed phase 1 (the Goal).
- Step 4: Repeat this process as many times as needed, until you are satisfied with the result and feel that you completed the first phase of the model.
- Step 5: Repeat the same steps for phase 2, 3 and 4. Continue until you've covered all the letters or phases of the GROW model.
- Step 6: Make a visual summary of the model containing your answers (e.g. use key words) so you can use the image as an aid.

10	Gew	Desired situation – what is the goal?	
9			
8			
7	Eerd	Previous success(es)	
6			
5	Visu scha	Visualise being one step higher on the scale – what does this look like?	
4	Huid	Current situation – where you are on the scale right now?	
3	Wat	What is in between 0 and the current situation? What has already worked? Are there any solutions, tools, successes and circumstances	
2	Wat hulp oms		
1			
0	Situ situa	The issue/problem – the situation you find yourself in without any element of the goal/desired	

Situation:		

	Questions	Answers
Phase 1: Goal		
Phase 2: Reality		
Phase 3: Options		
Phase 4: Way forward		

- Step 7: Done? Then briefly write down how you've experienced everything

REFLECTION:

After the exercise I feel…

What I experienced is …

The most important thing is that you can use the GROW model to help your employees. Maybe you already feel up for using it with them. That would be great. But if you still feel a bit unprepared/insecure, you might want to practice more before you start applying the model in your work environment. This exercise can help you with that.

Think of 2 examples:
1. A situation/conversation/problem that occurred in the past and that you would like to experience again if you had the opportunity to use the GROW model;
2. A problem of an employee that you want to guide using the GROW model.

Write down the examples you come up with. Prepare which questions you would like to ask per phase and how you would start the conversation. It's important to choose questions that sound natural to you. This way you will be more relaxed when guiding your employee(s).

Situation:

| Questions: |
| --- |
| G |
| R |
| O |
| W |

Feedforward performance tool

9. Why this tool?

"Why do my employees more often talk about *than* with *each other?", you ask Kelly. She immediately understands what you're saying. She's also noticed that it happens regularly in your team. Even trying to address each other about work issues proves difficult. The employees think that they are going to hurt each other's feelings and people might get angry. Unfortunately, this behaviour brings about negative effects: increased stress, inefficient behaviour and tension. Kelly tells you that you have given enough feedback in a correct way but that it might be useful to look at other ways of giving feedback: "I've heard of a method called feedforward. Maybe you can consider that option."*

Now, what is 'feedforward?' and why is it a better method than 'classic feedback' to raise resilience in teams and individuals?

When you give feedback, you focus on the past, on what has already happened and what can't be changed. Moreover, when you receive feedback, you often feel personally attacked, which makes you defensive. Why so? Because feedback is accusatory: we want to prove that someone is at fault and we focus on negative behaviour. That approach demotivates people and it reduces positive energy and engagement, with stress or frustrations as a result. Even if you would start off your feedback with something positive, the chances are that the person that receives the feedback thinks: "Ah, I already know what is happening here. First, I'll get a positive message. Next, I'll hear what I'm actually here for'.

When you give feedforward, you focus on the future, on what you can create and still have an impact on. When you receive feedforward, you do not feel attacked because feedforward aims at offering help, highlighting positive behaviour and stimulating creativity. That approach is inspirational, it gives hope and new energy so that involvement increases. Teaching people what is right instead of proving them what they are doing wrong, has a more productive and energising effect. Raised resilience is the result.
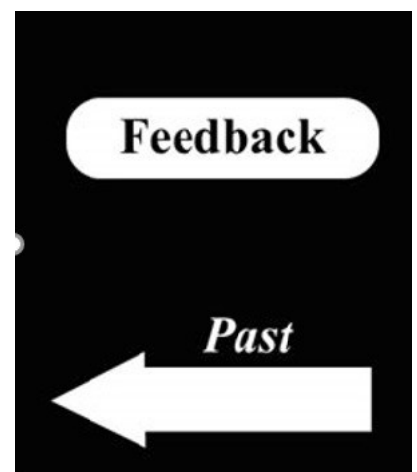
What is the reason behind this?

When Kelly suggested to investigate the principles of feedforward, it soon became clear what the advantages are. Progression feedback (or feedforward) follows three simple principles. These principles make sure that in situations where your resilience is put to the test, you can create new energy.

Principle 1: from – to +

Feedforward is positive and goal-oriented. Negative phrases are always first turned into positive goals before they are communicated. Because positively formulated goals bring about constructive reactions and cooperation while negative wordings evoke a defensive or negative response. With feedforward you only use positive phrases. For example, you can say: 'I would like to receive input from everyone during our meetings' instead of 'I notice that you are not actively participating'.

Principle 2: from person-oriented to contextual behaviour

Feedforward focuses on behaviour that works well in a specific context and not on personality traits (neither negative nor positive). When we focus on a certain desired behaviour in a specific situation, we address a growth mindset in ourselves and others. A growth mindset is the conviction that everyone – no matter who or where they are – can improve, learn and develop. And that it takes effort to do that. The growth mindset will say 'what can I do to get other managers to be more productive' instead of saying 'they are simply not motivated'. The latter statement is the voice of the 'fixed mindset' that sees things as unchangeable; it is how it is. Feedforward is a tool to inspire learning and growth, motivation and energy, and resilience. A culture of growth mindset thus leads to better performance, better cooperation and more job satisfaction. So, feedforward does not contain any person-oriented compliments or criticism, but focuses on behaviour that works well in a specific situation.
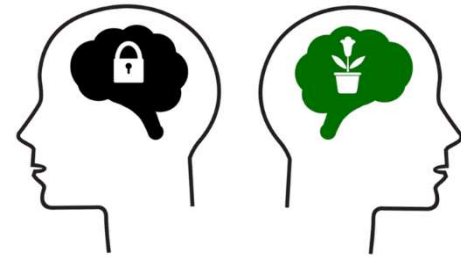
Principle 3: from stating to asking

The feedforward communication style uses positive, inviting, future-oriented and goal-oriented questions. And this motivate; the right questions lead to the right behaviour.

Let's take an example:

Suppose one of your employees often arrives late at work and you want talk to him/her about it. A feedback phrase would be: "*I've noticed that you often arrive late and that makes me rather angry*". The employee will quickly become defensive and say: "I am not always late and I don't always get the right information either". A feedforward phrase that does work is the following: "*Could you arrive 15 minutes earlier in the morning, so I can give you an update of what happened before I leave the next shift to you?*". This phrase is positive, focuses

on improvement, asks a question and explains why you're asking the question.

In short:
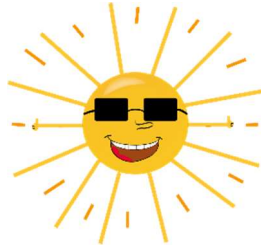
feedforward mainly provides positive, task-oriented and process-oriented information about the current performance that is related to the desired success in the future. It invites you to reflect on how that desired success can be achieved step by step. Although the reason for giving feedback can certainly be negative, it is not what the feedback should focus. Feedforward focusses on the positive future rather than on the negative past (as the latter in turn leads to a negative future).
The method avoids negative personal criticism and pointing out errors as much as possible. Instead, when you use feedforward, you choose your words well, so that recipients recognise that improvement is possible or necessary.[1]

10. Video/webinar

The videos or webinars explain more about the topics linked to this toolkit. Some will show examples, others give a more theoretical explanation. Let it inspire you to look for more videos.

Video 1: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s8j57eIi6nk: short introduction to feedforward
Video 2: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YvpRVYLm68A: Talk about feedforward and performance management
Video 3: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=32YhvrSoMgA: 4 keys on how to use feedforward in appraisals

11. Tips & tricks (checklists)

How to use the tips and tricks?
The tips and tricks are meant to give you some extra tools that you can use in daily life. You don't need to put everything into practice, you can simply choose what would help you in your situation.
Complete feedforward

---

[1] Progress-oriented feedback - Gwenda Schlundt Bodien

Feedforward is only complete when the following 3 questions are answered. Use these when you want to formulate positive and future-oriented feedback.

1. Provide information about **where you want to go** (what are the goals?)
2. Provide information about **how someone is doing now** (what progress is the person already making?)
3. Give information about **how someone can take the next step** (what can someone do to make even more progress?)

Dos and don'ts in feedforward

1. **DO: give future-oriented suggestions**
   When you want to make suggestions, use the following sentence: "*Here are 4 suggestions for the future. You don't need to use all of them. If you only use two, you are already 2 steps further. You can simply ignore the suggestions that don't seem useful to you.*" Or use the phrase: *'In order to… I would like us to…'*

2. **DON'T: avoid negative phrases**
   When we use negative words as 'not, never, bad, wrong, ...' the recipient experiences this as criticism. The past is also addressed more easily with these words. Replace them with words like "improve, add, well, successful, ..." to focus more on the future.

3. **DO: focus on results in a positive way**
   Results are about WHAT someone has done. Tell the recipient what has already been done in a positive way by using the word 'already' and link this to what can still be done.

4. **DON'T: steer clear of personal phrases**

Personal phrases are statements about someone or someone's character. Moreover, these sentences are preceded by a 'you message'. Some examples are 'you are lazy', 'you are hypocritical', 'you are a real slob'. They will always make people defensive.

5. **DO: focus on the process in a positive way**
   Process is about HOW someone has done something. It is not about the person himself, but about his or her approach to making progress. For example: "You've worked hard on ...".

12. Exercises

Exercise: (negative or positive) Process, person or result?

When you give feedback, you can encounter both a positive and a negative message. It could be that your employee has worked very hard on a certain task, so you can only be positive about his/her effort. But it is possible that, at the same time, you are not satisfied with the finished result. Where do you place your feedforward focus?

And when you've decided on a point of focus, what will be effective and what will not be? It is worth pausing with this thought as it will help and teach you to focus more on what you can say, what you do best and what is most effective. Remember that you cannot say everything; the content of a message that is too long does not arrive because it contains too much information.

You will get a case about Julia below.

1. Read the explanation about the different types of feedback, what works and what does not work.

2. Read the case of Julia and Peter

3. Write out the different types of messages that Peter might say

---

One feedback is not the other: some feedback is effective because it leads to progression, while other feedback may hold back progression leading to ineffective behaviour. That's why it's important to know who/what you are targeting and when your comments will be effective.

Feedback (both positive and negative) can focus on 3 aspects:

1. The person: focused on someone's personality (being creative, being lazy, ...)
2. The process: focusing on how something is or should be implemented, the strategy or the approach that a person uses
3. The result: focused on what someone has achieved or needs to achieve. Is the work correct or incorrect?

In other words, feedforward always focuses on the process or the result in a positive way.

	Person	Process	Result
Positive	Example: "You are a real team player." ✗ (not effective because this type of feedback is too vague)	Example: "To meet the deadlines, you could consult an electronic system in the future." ✓	Example: "The intention is that you use activating language in the policy document. Would you like to read and improve your ✓ concept again?
Negative	Example: "you are not really interested in meetings at all." ✗	Example: "With the completion of these files we will never get through the planned audit." ✗	Example: "The structure you gave to our system was not enough for me." ✗

Imagine the following: You, manager of team A, have a project meeting with Julia, manager of team B. The meeting was set up because you want the two teams to work better together, in order to respond better to staff absence (e.g. illness, annual leave, etc.), to better manage knowledge transfers and to better share expertise. Julia is a pioneer in the project group and always comes up with many innovative ideas. You appreciate that, but also notice that when you want to work out a concrete action plan and make agreements about who will do what, it is suddenly a lot quieter. As a result, you end up doing a lot of work. You find that Julia only gets to do the things she likes to do and is not willing to do the less interesting work.

This meeting has the exact same result: you have ended up with a pile of jobs whilst Julia does almost nothing. At the end of the day, you happen to walk to your cars together. She cheerfully tells that she will soon be going to Lisbon for a few days, which makes you even more annoyed than you already were. You open your mouth to give Julia feedback. And you say ....

	Person	Process	Result
Positive			

Negative			

Solution:

	Person	Process	Result
Positive	You are a very creative manager	You have brought in innovative ideas, which motivates me and makes us believe that this will work	You made a good decision about the distribution
Negative	You are a lazy	Your actions cause for all the work to fall on me alone and you pull back every time anyone asks you do to something	You do not live up to the agreements we made.

The first blow is half the battle.

If you don't prepare the feedforward that you want to give, chances are that you will receive negative feedback / a negative response from your employee when addressing an issue. It is difficult to turn negative formulations into something positive on the spot, during the conversation. This exercise will help you turn negative formulations into positive phrases.

✗	✓
You did not properly organise the files.	*You've organised the files already by color-coding AND I would like to add an alphabetical way too.*
Once again, I have not received the presentation in time.	*In order to have enough time for feedback, I would like us to make an achievable*

	deadline for handing in presentations, like we do in meetings.
I found the tone of your conversation with that client really inappropriate.	*I like the way you presented yourself to the client and would like to ask you to …*
You keep coming up to me with questions, but you would be able to find the solution yourself if you think about it a bit longer.	*I notice you are really motivated to do a good job by asking me questions. I really believe that if you think and search for answers yourself, you will achieve that too.*
You systematically arrive late at meetings.	*The last 3 meetings, I've waited for 10 minutes before starting.*

Exercise: from feedback to feedforward

When feedback gives answers to the following 3 questions, employees are more likely to embrace it instead of getting defensive:

1. What is the goal?
2. How is someone doing now?
3. What are the next steps?

Therefore, think of situations in which the team or members of that team could still make progress without sacrificing resilience. Always answer the 3 questions above to give people feedforward.

The following example will help you grasp what is meant here:
Imagine that one of your employees hardly ever lives up to commitments and that it annoys you. There are several things that you would like to say. Most likely, you would use classic feedback: "you never live up to commitments."
If we turn this into feedforward you would say; "In order to make meetings run smoothly, round up on time and thus save time for everyone, I would like us to arrive in the meeting room 5 minutes in advance. That way we live up to commitments, as you already do when you hand in files before their deadline.
In this case the answer to the 3 questions is:
1. The goal = organise meetings efficiently, round up on time, save time
2. How the person is already doing = we can count on each other, for example when you hand in files
3. Next steps = arrive 5 minutes in advance

Progression you want to achieve	Feedforward
	1. The goal

	2. How the person is already doing 3. Next steps
	1. The goal 2. How the person is already doing 3. Next steps
	1. The goal 2. How the person is already doing 3. Next steps

Exercise: asking for feedforward

To feel the effect of feedforward and to ensure that your team is open to it, it is important to go through the process yourself. Therefore, think of a situation where you can and want to make progress as a team leader. Ask colleagues / your employees / other managers, for future-oriented suggestions on how to proceed. When they fall into the criticism trap, you can point out that you are only looking for positive, future-oriented and result-oriented suggestions. Give them an example of what feedforward looks like, if needed.

Development	Suggestions

Exercise: what does feedforward look like?

You can also give feedforward by applying 2 simple rules:
1. Describe the desired situation in positive and concrete terms, explain why the desired situation is important and what the effects would be if this goal is reached.
2. Then ask a question that makes the employee reflect on his contribution to achieve the goal, the desired situation.

Therefore, an example that meets the ingredients above:

"It is important that we hear and consider everyone's proposals in our meetings, so that we arrive at joint, balanced decision-making. What contribution could you make so that we can hear the proposals of all team members during the meeting? "

To let you practice how to give feedforward a bit more, we would like to give you some cases you can use to formulate feedforward. This will help you in the future, when you will give feedforward in your work life.

a) Read the case.

b) Use the following sentences to shape the progress-oriented feedback:

- To achieve
- It is important for me to ...
- Can you…

c) Use the above ingredients as a checklist to see if your feedback is complete.

Case 1: One of your employees has had his own structure and working method for years. Recently, new procedures that make work easier, faster and more efficient were implemented. You notice that this employee can't keep up with the changes and his performance is deteriorating. Yet, new procedures must be implemented consistently. How do you approach him?

Feedforward:

It is important that we can implement the procedures consistently and make sure that everyone understand these, so that we can make work easier for everyone. What can you do differently in order to keep up and understand these changes?

Case 2: One of your employees is known for his lack of thorough preparation of contracts. As a result, colleagues always feel compelled to check those contracts on errors. According to you, this is time lost. How do you handle the situation?

Feedforward:

It's important that we, in order to avoid double work and save time, …

Case 3: One of your employees works as fast as his colleagues. He meets the deadlines and can work through the files that need to be wrapped up. On the other hand, you think he can do even better. How do you approach him?

Feedforward:

It is important for me to see where the talents of people lie and how to use them in the best manner so we can arrive at higher personal growth which has an effect on our entire business. How could we expand your talents in other tasks?

Case 4: Your employee does all the work that is assigned to her thoroughly and efficiently. When she is finished, she relaxes, sends text messages, checks Facebook during working hours and leaves her desk to go outside. She does this until she gets new tasks from colleagues. How do you talk to him/her about this?

Feedforward:
In order to achieve the best work occupation, balance and fairness in division of tasks, I would like to ask you how you could fill up your time after finishing your task in a thorough and efficient way?

Case 5: An employee is popular with his/her colleagues and maintains good relationships with everyone. But you think he is chatting a bit too much and you find it annoying.
How do you handle this?

Feedforward:
It is important to me to stay focused on work issues during work hours and focus on private things in breaks so we can achieve our goals at the end of the day. What contribution can you make to keep things separately?

Case 6: An employee in your team thinks she has too much work. You do not agree with this and believe that if she were to organise her work better, she would be able to do even more.
How do you approach her?

Feedforward

Exercise: team-oriented feedforward

We strongly believe that not only team leaders should use feedforward. Instead, it is also important to reflect on how to encourage a team to use the same method. For further information, you can watch the videos below. The exercise is explained in the videos so that you can go through it yourself.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EAvv4xvjTI4 (English version by Marshall Goldsmith, writer of *Feedforward*)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oPRDiGk7Uqg&t=319s (English video in which the exercise is explained step by step. This is a slightly different variant than Marshall Goldsmith's)

Social styles

13. Which tool and why this tool?

Our personality is a big factor in the way we deal with stress and how we react when feeling stressed. Our personality largely determines:

- How stress reveals itself.
  Some tend to vent their stress towards others, others just revert to themselves.
- What we consider to be stressful.
  For example, there are people who maintain an overview in tense situations, others become quite chaotic. What creates stress for one person, may be a breeze for someone else.
- What helps to relieve stress.
  Things that help to remove work stress for one person, may be counterproductive for the other.

When you gain insight into the personality of your employees, you also gain insight into their stress factors, their stress behaviour and what can help to strengthen their resilience.
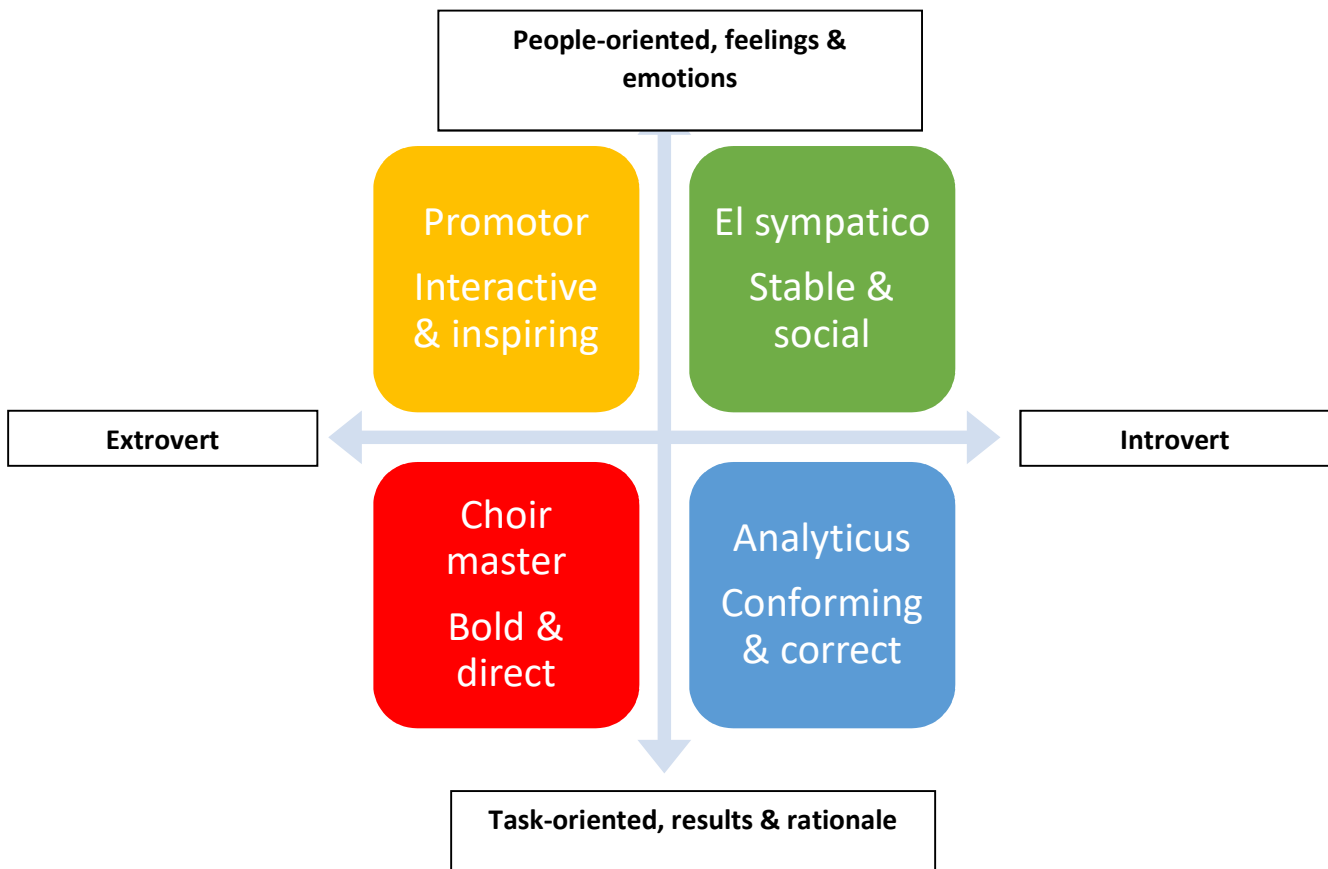This not only benefits the personal well-being of your employees but also helps to strengthen the interactions and relationships between yourself and the employees.

What is a social style?
A combination of behavioural preferences, attributes, and patterns that control how someone responds, thinks, and acts is called a social style. Each of us has a mix of these styles in which one or two styles appear more often than others, the so-called 'preferred style(s)'.
What gives us stress, how we can recognise stress signals and what someone needs to eliminate stress, therefore depends very much on the social style that someone expresses. 4 Social styles, 4 names, 4 colours... All this is determined by behavioural preferences:

1. People have different preferences when it comes to their interest in the external world (extra version) and the inner world (introversion).
2. People take decisions based on impersonal, logical analysis (thinking) or in a more subjective and committed way (feeling).

	People-oriented, feelings & emotions	
Promotor Interactive & inspiring		**El sympatico** Stable & social
Choir master Bold & direct		**Analyticus** Conforming & correct
	Task-oriented, results & rationale	

Extrovert ← → **Introvert**

If you follow the 'Analyst' style, you are motivated by quality, perfection and being correct

- **Your life's motto is**: 'give me time – I'LL DO IT RIGHT'
- **You love**: schedules, lists, correct procedures, being consistent, accurate and like to think before you act. You like matters to be clear and precise.
- **You are strong in**: analysing situations thoroughly and indicating errors. You are orderly. But sometimes you will lose yourself too much in the details, you can be a little silly and too cautious.
- **You hate**: making mistakes, getting criticised, having to make fast decisions and insufficient time for analysis and evaluation, not thoroughly understanding things.

If you follow the 'El Sympatico' style, you are motivated by good relations, appreciation and a quiet living environment

- **Your life's motto is**: 'Show me you care – I'LL DO IT with CARE'

- **You love**: predictability, routine, working together and you can use your specialty. You will take into consideration your feelings before you act.
- **You are strong in**: helping others, keeping the peace and being very loyal. But sometimes you crawl into your shell, you are stubborn and too modest.
- **You hate**: not knowing where you stand, insecurity, disagreement and feeling hunted down.

If you follow the Promoter style, you are motivated by recognition, popularity and fun

- **Your life's motto is:** 'Involve me – I'LL DO IT TOGETHER'
- **You love:** a friendly atmosphere, freedom to talk and make jokes. You will take into consideration your feelings before you act.
- **You are strong in:** convincing and motivating others. You're always excited, but can sometimes exaggerate, talk too much and fail to finish tasks.
- **You hate**: timetables, routine, rejection, deadlines, and unfriendly people

If you follow the Conductor/ Choir director style, you are motivated by results, action and goals!

- **Your life's motto is**: "Be smart, be fast, be gone – I'LL DO IT NOW'
- **You love**: challenges, variety, difficult tasks, freedom of action and taking the lead. You like to think before you act.
- **You are strong in:** convincing and motivating others. You're fast at troubleshooting, taking risks and being decisive. But sometimes you come across as authoritarian and impatient and you are likely to forget about the details.
- **You hate:** people wanting to take over control, doubting your decisions or trying to abuse you.

14.   Video/webinar

Video 1: this video talks about the link between the 4 social styles, Insights Discovery and mindfulness..

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xu7E95iB0GY

video 2: TED Talk about the link between your brain and your personality

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8pq_tCgDkT4&t=3s

video 3: social styles for managers: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LUJsoyJN6zc

15.   Tips & tricks (checklists)

Before you read through these tips, we advise you to first go through the "Discover the social style of your employees" exercise.

Analyst

I get stressed from… lack of information, structure and logic, qualitatively bad work, bad preparation, forced spontaneous decisions, wasted time or hasty work, social distraction

You'll notice it because I become… critical, ask many questions, deliberate a lot, start nitpicking and fixate on details too much, make rational analyses, become distant, withdrawn and short-fused.

Help me remove my stress by… providing feedback on how to move forward, offer detailed information and give me time to process it, go back to the beginning with a better analysis, provide the 'why' behind a story and answer my question, confirm details clearly and written down.

El Sympatico

I get stressed from… unfair or impersonal treatment, breach of standards and values, interruptions, time pressure or sudden changes and conflicts

You'll notice it because I become… quiet, withdrawn or appear hurt, passive and stubborn and act out with resistance that can be viewed as impersonal.

Help me remove my stress by… understanding my feelings, have personal contact with me to restore confidence, ask questions to hear my opinion, set the task aside for a moment and give me rest, giving clear instructions and help me how to handle or do things, focus on certainties, on things that are already present and go well.

Promotor

I get stressed from… restriction of my flexibility, creativity and freedom, not being a part of the group, being forgotten or personally rejected, lack of influence and involvement, nitpicking behaviour, working alone a lot and tight procedures.

You'll notice it because I become… oversensitive, emotional or chaotic, begin to talk a lot, become aimless, and wanting to be involved in relationships too much.

Help me remove my stress by… offering room to move where I can decide the speed, letting me get it all out just for a moment and then move on, breaking the tension by leading attention to something else or using humour, give me examples I can relate to, listen carefully and let me know who is involved.

Choir director

I get stressed from… lack of focus, indecisiveness, losing control, lack of concrete leadership, passiveness and slowness, not saying what someone really thinks or feels, too much talking not enough action.

You'll notice it because I become… impatient, dominant, demanding, bossy and keep on going even though it seems to be the wrong thing to do. I'll take over and don't take into account other people's sensitivities.

Help me remove my stress by… letting me take quick action or make a decision, or offer me a time-out, giving me a chance to provide my opinion and point of view, deliver alternatives and give me the freedom to choose, put me in the driver seat or tell me clearly what you are going to do and what the benefits will be of that action.

Tips for recognising a dominant style on the basis of body language and intonation
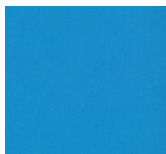
Body language: Keep distance, firm posture, direct eye contact, no gestures.
Intonation: Controlled, direct, thoughtful, monotonous.
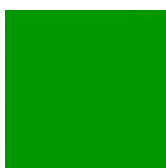
Body language: Relaxed, leans backwards, makes friendly eye contact and uses modest gestures.
Intonation: Warm, soft, calm, low volume

Body language: Comes closer, uses touch, relaxed, humour, friendly eye contact and uses expressive gestures.
Intonation: Enthusiastic and energetic, emotion in the voice, friendly and stimulating.

Body language: Keeps his distance, firm handshake, direct eye contact, controlled gestures.
Intonation: strong, loud and clear, convinced, direct.

Tips to coach different social styles

To help you coach employees by using the social styles, we want to refer you to another tool in this toolkit: The core quadrants of Ofman. Before you read the checklist below, we would like to ask you to go through the explanation of this tool to reach a deeper understanding.

A social style says something about how someone is living his personality. The deal with personalities is that you can't think of them as being good or bad; each social style has positive and negative features. Or in other words: every social style has a number of core qualities and pitfalls. In relation to stress, the link between core qualities and pitfalls also plays a strong role.
We will give some examples to support this:

- A core quality of a promoter can be positivity. This positivity can express itself in the fact that a promoter can easily face challenges and feel able to deal with many tasks. The pitfall in this case is then taking on too much work without realising.
- A core quality of an analyst is accuracy. A pitfall may be that when the analyst is under stress he loses himself in details and cannot deliver a finished product.

The promoter and the analyst in these examples are not going to change; social styles are stable. Luckily, as they are characterised by several good qualities.
It makes little sense to ask a promoter to be less positive or an analyst to be less detailed.
What does make sense is to look for the challenges and solutions in a stressful situation together: how can your employee maintain his core quality, without falling victim to his pitfall?
This way you can find (sustainable) solutions that work for the employee in question.

How to have a coaching conversation, using social styles and core qualities:
1. The start of a conversation
   a. Blue: **To be completed**
   b. Green: start with 'small-talk' where you can check how things are going with your employee
   c. Yellow: **To be completed**
   d. Red: immediately tell the purpose of the conversation, how long it will take and what you expect from the employee

2. Discuss the concept of social styles together.
   a) Ask your employee to fill in the questionnaire from the toolkit 'personal coping' beforehand.
   b) Fill in the same questionnaire.
   c) Place the results side by side.
3. Ask your employee to define a core quality or appoint a core quality of your colleague (see also tips and tricks 'core quadrants').
4. Question how this core quality reacts under stress and what the accompanying pitfall is, or appoint where you notice the challenge lies. (See also tips and tricks 'core quadrants')

5. Look for possible challenges together. (See also tips and tricks 'core quadrants')
6. Ask how you can provide support in this.

To give you a more concrete idea of what a conversation like this may look like, we've prepared an example script:

Imagine the following situation: Erin is team leader of a team of 7 people. One of the team members is Paul. Paul is 36, married and has no children. He's the back-office administrator and really loves his job. He's known in the team as somebody who is accurate and punctual, and he gets along well with his colleagues.

The last few weeks, Erin has noticed some changes in Paul's behaviour: he doesn't meet deadlines, he's often the last one in the office and is withdrawn. Erin decides to talk to him about these observations as she is worried something may be wrong. Paul mentions that he feels exhausted and cannot manage it anymore: 'it's just too much. I can no longer deliver the quality that is expected of me within the time given, so I have to work late and during the weekend'. Erin therefore proposes to organise a coaching session to further discuss the issue. She also asks Paul to prepare by filling in the 'personal coping' questionnaire and she will do the same.

We're now at the moment of the coaching session.

Erin: Hi Paul, we agreed on this meeting to talk about your difficulties in managing your work and the effect that this has on your well-being. I want to coach you in finding some concrete actions that can help you in this. How are you today?

Paul: Pretty much the same as the last few weeks. But I'm thankful for this meeting and I'm curious to find out how it can help me.

E: Then it seems to me that it's a good idea to start.

We both filled in the 'personal coping' questionnaire to discover our social styles, so let me briefly explain this concept. A social style is a combination of behavioural preferences, attributes, and patterns that control how someone responds, thinks, and acts. Each of us has a mix of these styles in which one or two styles appear more often than others, the so-called 'preferred style(s)'.

What gives us stress, how we can recognise stress signals and what someone needs to eliminate stress therefore depends very much on the social style that someone expresses.

That's why I believe it is a useful tool for you; it will work to give you some tips and tricks to manage your workload. The social styles will help us to search for concrete actions that really work for you and match your personality.

P: That sounds reasonable. It wasn't easy to fill in the questionnaire but I asked my wife to fill it in too and we came to the same result.

E: And what is your style of preference?

P: Analyst.

E: I came to the same result!

Each social style has a couple of core qualities. A core quality is a specific strength that characterises someone. Something you are really good at, or for which you are often praised by others. They make you the person you are today. Four core qualities of an analyst are objectivity, accuracy, analytical and being orderly. Which core quality do you recognise yourself in most?

P: I feel I possess all of these but the one that speaks to me most is accuracy. I believe that a high quality of work is very important and being accurate is necessary to reach that quality.

E: I notice in our daily work that this is important to you and it's one of the things that I really appreciate in you and what makes you good at your job. What I also notice however is that this core quality has started to become a pitfall. If an analyst is under stress he has the tendency to become caught in too many details. Is that something you recognise?

P: Yes, It's a vicious cycle! I want to oversee all details as I'm scared that I miss important things, so I re-read everything and add things to be complete, but it feels like it's never good enough. And my workload just ends up being bigger and bigger. But are you saying now that I shouldn't be so detailed anymore? That sounds too simple and I don't think I want to be like that.

E: Oh no, definitely not. It's your core quality, so we don't want to lose that! What we can and must do however is look for a balance between your core quality and your pitfall, so neither gets pushed too far into the wrong direction. We don't want you to give up your accuracy, but we also don't want you to get stuck in details and lose your motivation. Do you have any idea of small interventions you can implement to help with this? We want to find a solution that works for you, so it's best to come up with this yourself.

P: I can't think of anything right now, but it's an interesting exercise. Can I think about it and come back to you with some suggestions?

E: Yes, of course. We will plan a new meeting next week.

After having a good think, Paul returned with thorough feedback. He's now very conscious of his core qualities and pitfalls. Each time he notices himself stepping into his pitfall, he will ask Erin to review his work and ask for feedback on the parts he's not satisfied about. They will trial this idea for a month and will then evaluate the results.

16.   Exercises

Exercise: explore the social style of others

When you understand **the social style of others,** it can help you deal with their stress in a more conscious way: what are stress factors for others, how does stress manifest itself in them and what can help make their stress level get down? Therefore, we have provided 2 parts in this assignment. First, you'll learn to recognise people's different social styles in a dialogue. Second, you'll go to work with people's different social styles in your own environment.

A. Watch the video. You will be shown 3 dialogues. After that you cross the social style that fits the 2 persons.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BpP22JI9asA

Dialogue	Social style person A (left)	Social style Person B (right)
1	a) Promotor (yellow) b) Choir director (red) c) Analyst (blue) d) El sympathico (green)	a) Promotor (yellow) b) Choir director (red) c) Analyst (blue) d) El sympathico (green)
2	a) Promotor (yellow) b) Choir director (red) c) Analyst (blue) d) El sympathico (green)	a) Promotor (yellow) b) Choir director (red) c) Analyst (blue) d) El sympathico (green)
3	a) Promotor (yellow) b) Choir director (red) c) Analyst (blue) d) El sympathico (green)	a) Promotor (yellow) b) Choir director (red) c) Analyst (blue) d) d) El sympathico (green)

Solution:

1. C and A
2. B and D
3. A and C

B. Now look for social styles within your team. This insight can help you determine which colleagues can work together because they reinforce each other, which colleagues have difficulties working together because their behaviours cause each other stress and what you can do to help. Try using the Tips & Tricks Checklist to see how their stress is reflected and try to describe 1 action you can implement to help.

- What does your team look like now?
- What are the biggest stress factors that you see reflected?
- What can you do about it?

Devision of the social styles

- Blue analyst
- Yellow promotor
- Red choir director
- Green El Sympatico
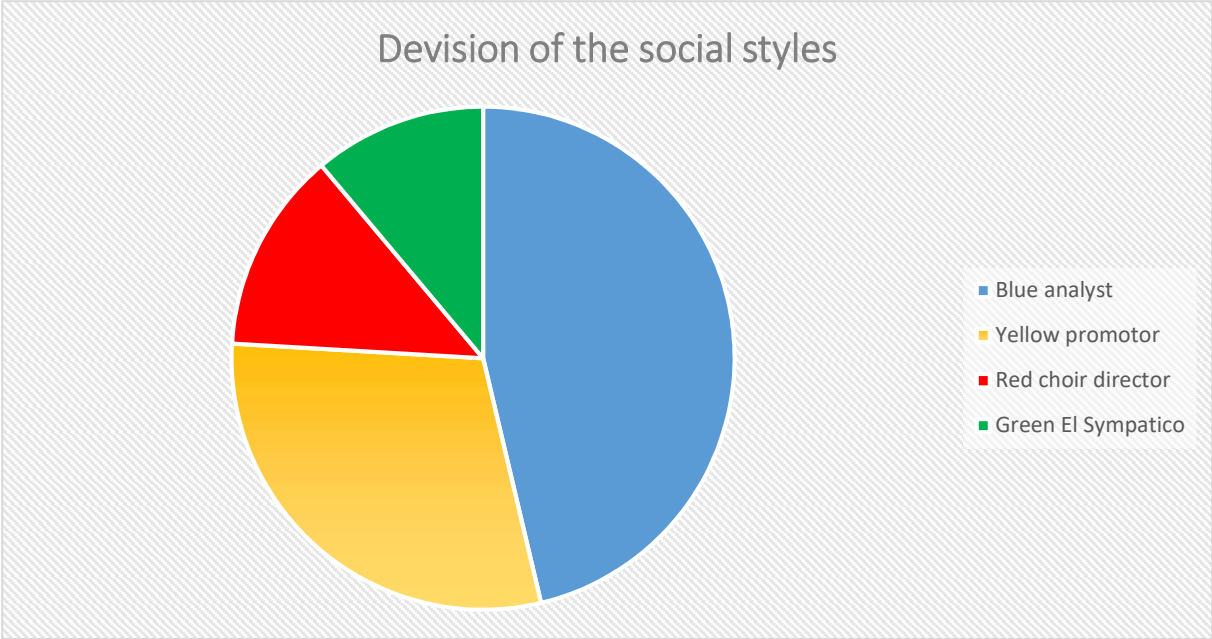
Exercise: match the social style with work (profile)

It may happen that after years of working in a certain function, employees find out that they are no longer happy where they are. The primary colour required for a particular function does not match with the employee's primary colour anymore. You can prefer to interact a lot with colleagues (colour yellow/green), above controlling processes based on appointments with colleagues in your company (colour blue). Although one thing does not always exclude the other of course, it works better if one's personal colour is also the colour on which you have to rely most in your job. In that setting, your qualities will express themselves naturally because the things that are important in the workplace correspond with the things that someone considers important as a person. And this again stimulates resilience.

This exercise is therefore a two-part assignment. Assignment A is to determine which social styles best meets the tasks. Sometimes you can also make a combination of 2 colours. Once you've done that, you're going to look at your own team. What tasks could you ask them to do, appropriate to their social style, to alleviate stress and increase resilience?

Assignment A:

Task	Yellow promotor	Red choir director	Blue analyst	Green El sympatico
Brainstorming				
Dealing with processes based on actual appointments				
Pleasant working with colleagues				
Independent decision making				
Coming up with creative marketing strategies				

Translating				

Assignment B: Write down which tasks you could add for a yellow promoter, a red choir director, a blue analyst and a green El Sympatico. It does not always have to be new tasks; a redistribution of current packages can also be of help. Allow your employees to use their talents as much as possible!

SOCIAL STYLE	TASKS
Yellow Promotor	
Green El Sympatico	
Blue Analyst	
Red choir director	

Exercise: getting your team out of their comfort zone

Depending on your social style, there are several things that you will feel comfortable with, others that will feel more challenging and stretching, while other issues will bring you sever stress. This translates into 3 zones: comfort zone, stretch zone and the stress zone.

Someone who responds with a promoter style will, for example, be better at dealing with changes in work and/or private life (this is what we call 'comfort zone'). Someone more introverted and task-oriented (the analyst) will for example experience a lot of stress if asked to do public speaking (this is what we call 'stress zone'). A third person with more red energy (the choir director) will view a new task as a challenge, but at the same time find this to be exciting because he can't control the situation just yet (this is what we call 'stretch zone').

The following exercise can be introduced into your team:

- Step 1:Ask employees to write down their stressors individually (both in specific tasks and in general cases where they experience stress).

- Step 2: Put people together in pairs of two or three

- Step 3: Give them 3 pieces of paper
  - o paper A: comfort zone
  - o paper B: stretch Zone
  - o Paper C: stress Zone

- Step 4: Ask them to divide their tasks on the 3 papers, working in their pairs to achieve this.
  - o When are your limits exceeded (= stress zone)?
  - o Where are you very happy and not too bothered (= comfort zone)?
  - o What do you find challenging and makes you grow (= Stretch zone)?

- Step 5: Ask the employees to brainstorm about (at least) 1 action they can take to reduce this stress, working in their pairs to achieve this.

Comfort zone	Stretch zone	Stress zone

As we have already discussed; everyone is different and every employee has a different style. As a manager you are faced with a big challenge: how can you meet everyone's style? What if a style is not present at all or too present? The most common situations where all styles come together are meetings, consultation moments, teamwork in a certain project, etc. These situations can, if all styles are matched, lead to great results and a good, motivated feeling. On the other hand, it can also lead to frustrations and increased stress. As a manager, if you better understand each other's style and make optimal use of them, it will increase your ability to such situations into the right direction. We will get to work on this in the next exercise.

1. We describe a meeting situation in which the four social styles are discussed
2. We show you how to work with 1 social style during a meeting
3. After that it is up to you to tackle the other social styles.
    a. Determine who has which style
    b. Write down what your reasoning is: which elements from the case led to this choice?
    c. Write down some tips or concrete actions that you could take based on information you already have about the social styles: what helps a specific social style?

Today you have a meeting with your team. Dominique would like to start immediately and takes the initiative to do so. She says 'I would like to organise a customer event to better profile our image on the market'. Peter joins in and starts to elaborate on different ideas about what can happen at the customer event. Dominique starts to get annoyed by this chaotic interruption and halts Peter; she wants to bring the meeting back to the topic she proposed and does not want any discussion. 'Yes' or 'no', that is the only thing she wants to hear. While Peter tries to improve the atmosphere a bit by telling a joke, Anne keeps in the background and doesn't speak out about what she thinks. She would prefer to make a compromise that is acceptable to everyone. If she has to take on more tasks in order to make things easier for others, she wants to do so. Suddenly Sander intervenes and starts asking specific questions: have you considered that the costs of such an event might keep the day from being profitable? He tells everyone in detail what the previous customer event looked like and what he learned from this. Sander's thorough analysis starts to bore Peter a bit and he zones out of the conversation. Dominique in turn does not want to admit that the idea may

have been a bit impulsive and seeks a confrontation instead by assuring that it will yield most profit in the short and long term.

Let's focus on Dominique for now. She is clearly a red conductor in this meeting. When something does not go the way a red conductor had in mind or someone wants to take control, they'll become stressed. The result is that they fall into reason, get angry quickly, do not let themselves be interrupted, are stubborn, etc. Hereby, things can get stuck.

How do you deal with that as a manager?
- Do not avoid confrontation: set boundaries and use a lot of 'I-phrases' like I want to, I need you to, …
- Prepare well and stay on topic
- Be clear, short and powerful: say what you are going to do, what you think, what you expect, etc.
- If you still want to reach a quick decision: give the red conductor some options (e.g. a checklist where he/she can indicate their preference in a quick and effective manner).

	Dominant style	Reasoning	How do you deal with it as a manager?
Peter			
Anne			
Sander			

	Dominant style	Reasoning	How do you deal with it as a manager?
Peter	Yellow promoter	Talks to you about everything, likes to deviate, is enthusiastic, can convincingly convey his views, but has trouble getting tangible so that the meeting can get stuck	• Mention clearly and publicly that you appreciate his contribution (nice atmosphere, ideas, etc.) • Set limits and question a concept for limited talk time • Involve him in the decision-making process and give space to express his opinion
Anne	Green 'el sympatico'	Rather awaiting and giving others space to speak. Intervenes only when she is invited to speak, she wants to mediate, but she is quickly drowned out	• Give a concrete task (such as taking minutes) • Be clear when you do want a decision and give time for her to be ready to speak her mind • Build in some routine so that Anne feels more comfortable to speak her mind, e.g. a step by step procedure that will be followed to come to a good decision, a routine task division during meetings, etc.

Sander	Blue Analyst	Quiet and listens with attention. Is always well prepared, quickly falls back on knowledge and details and sometimes even gives sarcastic comments when stressed	• Involve immediately and actively • Make sure in your instructions to tell Sander that the focus is on giving a summary rather than a full analysis • Set a clear time deadline • Give enough information and let someone have time to think and prepare